

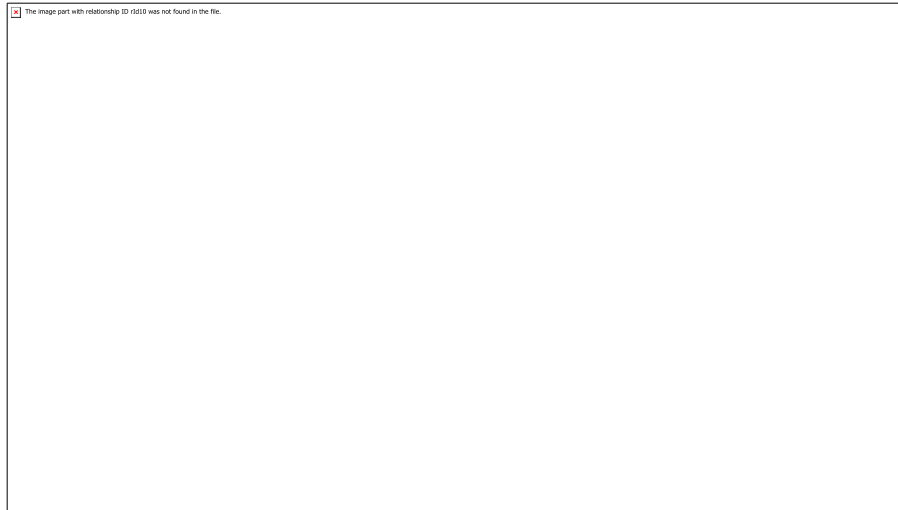


HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Habitat International Coalition

Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism for Sustainable Development

World Urban Forum, Katowice, Poland, N46, 28 June 2020, 12:30–14:00



*Figure 1: Flyer accompanying the announcement/invitation to the Networking Event.
Source: HIC-HLRN.*

This networking event, organized by Housing and Land Rights Network – Habitat International Coalition, was intended to provide update participants on the process toward developing a self-organized stakeholder-engagement policy and mechanism background promised for new UN-Habitat with its revised governance structure since 2019. In addition, it was organized also to review the rich history of UN Habitat stakeholder engagement since 1976.

The panel, followed with participant discussion, gathered veterans of UN Habitat engagement, including UN Habitat officers and stakeholders from civil society and local government to share 46 years of experience.

That will provide the basis for consideration of current opportunities for engagement, as well as the proposals presented by the Institutional Mechanism Working Group and reports from the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) for consideration of future prospects for developing the promising self-organized mechanism for supporting and advising UN Habitat's normative and operational roles to meet the present and coming challenges of inclusive, equitable and sustainable human settlements development within the framework of New Urban Agenda commitments.

Key objectives:

- Raise awareness of the good practices in UN Habitat stakeholder engagement (SE)

- Review formal proposals to develop stakeholder engagement
- Envision stakeholder engagement with UN Habitat, its Executive Board (EB) and Assembly
- Collect proposals from hybrid participants on next steps and future prospects of a stakeholder-engagement mechanism (SEM).

The networking event relates to the WUF11 theme “Equitable urban futures” as a key theme, objective and bonding principle of diverse stakeholders. Therefore, equitability will be a central consideration of the event. Added to, and complementary to equitability are also the values of inclusion, meaningful participation, normative functions and sustainability of urban futures. It is expected that the outcoming proposals and agreed principles will enrich the understanding and expression of equitable urban futures as a message from WUF 11 to be taken forward in stakeholder-engagement policy development and implementation.

Welcome:

HIC Secretary-General **Yolande Hendler** opened the session the organizers for accepting this important proposal in the last days of WUF preparation for a discussion of new horizons in cooperation with UN-Habitat as other Charter-based specialized organization of the UN System. She expressed appreciation to participants for bringing their ideas, experience, related wisdom and suggestions to the discussion of how to support the new UN-Habitat through the promised self-organized SEM.

Method and objectives:

The event was organized as a seminar, led by a panel of practitioners to set in motion a discussion on the future of stakeholder engagement with UN Habitat, especially as the custodiam agency of SDG 11 and our New Urban Agenda (2016).

The panel is formed of three presentations on the progress so far, followed by an open discussion and brainstorming on the subject in light of the information shared. All relevant suggestions will be recorded in the form of a report to the UN-Habitat EB’s *ad hoc* Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement in anticipation of the indispensable political decision by the UN Habitat EB and its endorsement by the 2023 2nd UN Habitat Assembly. That decision/resolution would provide the political basis for the infrastructure of stakeholder engagement with an institutional mechanism rationalizing and organizing stakeholder input into, and amplification of UN Habitat’s normative and operational work.

The Panelists (in order of presentation):

Mme. Lucia Kiwale is the chief UN Habitat officer for the Partnerships and Local Governments Unit of UN-Habitat’s External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovation Division (ERSKI). She holds an LLM from the University of Westminster and has previously served as the Gender Liaison in UN Habitat, but has broad experience in UN-Habitat constituencies. She is a friend and colleague of civil society engagement with UN Habitat, but also maintains a wide spectrum of contacts and perspectives in the field of stakeholder engagement with the Nairobi-based UN agency.

Prof. Siraj Sait, is an internationally recognized development expert and human rights lawyer and has experience working with the UN, governments and the business community. He is Director of Research at the Royal Docks School of Business and Law at the University of East London, where he also heads the Centre for Islamic Finance, Law and Communities. He is a founder member of the Global Land Tool Network. His appointments include Special Public Prosecutor, Chair of Somalia Benadir laws drafting

committee and the UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) and director of the Noon Centre of Equality and Diversity in the UK. He leads work on gender equality, youth, human rights, urban governance, climate change, conflict and land rights; an is the principal author of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) publication series on women and land in Islamic countries. For our purposes today, Prof. Siraj will speak in his capacity as co-chair of the UN-Habitat’s select SAGE, providing input to the UN-Habitat director general, in order to update us on related developments.

Joseph Schechla is the coordinator of HIC’s Housing and Land Rights Network, based in Cairo. Having worked within and outside the UN System, he has practical and theoretical background in the field of civil society engagement through the Major Groups engaged with UN bodies and programs, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN’s Rome-based agencies, the High-level Political Forum on the 2030 Agenda and the UN Human Rights System. With an academic background in international relations and international law, Joseph has participated in a UN System-wide review of stakeholder engagement to provide models for the new UN-Habitat’s stakeholder-engagement mechanism.



Figure 2: The panel, with Ms. Lucia Kiwale addressing the participants. Source: HIC-HLRN.

Mme Kiwale thanked the organizers for creating the space to discuss the new SEM, and updated the participants on the efforts of the Partnership and Local Government Unit toward the SEM, including a recent [review of nine UN agencies’ stakeholder-engagement experiences](#). That review found that some examples involved stakeholders as equal partners in deliberations on budget and program, making recommendations to Member states.

These assume various forms: the unique egalitarian tripartite model of the International Labour Organisation (ILO); advisory groups, as in the case of UNAIDS; and stakeholder and civil society policy forums, as in the case of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Ms. Kiwale recounted that, in 2019, UN-Habitat “was asked to use the model of UNWOMEN,” with hand-picked advisors forming the SAGE.

She mentioned also the former General Assembly of Partners (GAP), which UN-Habitat supported during the Habitat III process. That grouping has continued under a separate registration and trademark.

Ms. Kiwale conveyed that Member states in the UN-Habitat Assembly (and Committee of Permanent Representatives) are looking forward to advice. The governments have made it known that they have no appetite for an SEM to form by starting at the country level. She advised that her office is looking forward to suggestions for the SEM **until August 2022**.

The most-recent meeting of the EB Ad Hoc Working Group on Stakeholder-engagement Policy (15 June 2022) considered a [proposed structure for UN-Habitat Stakeholder Engagement Policy](#), which Ms. Kiwale described. That set of principles and approaches is intended to guide the Working Group going forward and is a subject of review for all stakeholders.

Prof. Sait expressed his appreciation to the organizers and, in particular, for the work of HIC and HLRN, including on the subject of stakeholder engagement. As already noted in HIC-HLRN's review of SEM options, stakeholder engagement across the UN System is patchy. Among the options are to pursue a single stakeholder voice, or more (e.g., one each from civil society, local government and private sector).

Among the elements need in building the SEM are mutual confidence among the parties, and the objective of introducing an insider role within the EB. Options include appointing or electing SEM members and rotating them. He reported that AGGI has been spreading the word about the eventual SEM for UN-Habitat.

In response to a question about the role of SAGE during this period since 2019, Prof. Sait characterized described it as a placeholder, awaiting the new SEM.

Mr. Schechla presented the bases for (1) the 2019 HIC-HLRN study of UN-Habitat stakeholder engagement and (2) the findings and recommendations from a review of UN SEMs and outlines of an SEM for UN-Habitat presented at the previous WUF (2020), which the Institutional Mechanism Working Group formed at the first UN Habitat Assembly in 2019 had promised. The former adapted the [Arnstein "ladder of participation"](#) (1969) to milestones in the course of UN-Habitat's history since 1976. The [inter-agency review](#) presented at WUF10 (also in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#) summaries) found that, based on the Arnstein criteria of engagement, the best practices and most-legitimate SEMs in the UN System were those of the Rome-based agencies ([International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty](#) (IPC) vis-à-vis the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the [Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism](#) for relations with the Committee on World Food Security. The resulting recommendations for a self-organized SEM for UN-Habitat were broad outlines of three reciprocally communicating groups of civil society, private sector and local government stakeholders, jointly meeting at least once a year with the EB as a Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Board.

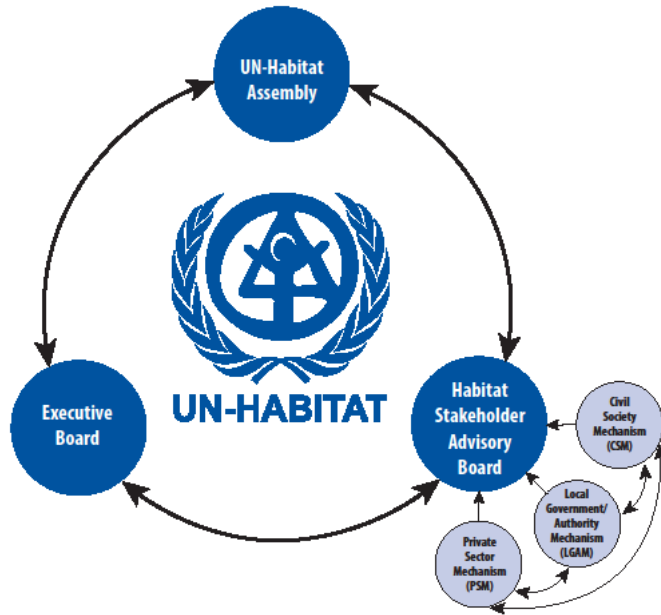


Figure 3: Graphic depiction of a UN-Habitat stakeholder-engagement mechanism and Stakeholder Advisory Board, meeting at least once a year with the UN-Habitat EB. Source: HIC-HLRN.

Discussion and recommendations:

In the open discussion that followed, participants reacted to the presentations by noting that the ILO model, however successful a good practice, would be difficult to manage in the case of UN-Habitat. That is, in part, because of the complexity of stakeholders in urban development and governance such as service providers and consumers; for example, transport sector and passengers.

Another commented that the SAGE has been invisible and unaccountable since its appointment in 2019 and is not a viable alternative to a SEM. However, other operational models of advisory mechanisms such as the UN’s Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Advisory Groups,¹ which involve appointed members in meaningful consultation and collective policy and programming decisions.

A participant from Brazil gave the example from the City of Mirangã, where civil society participates in the long-term planning and collective governance have made it the most-livable city in Brazil. That governance model avoids the hazard of politics and ideological changes interrupting the social function of the city. That model is now being replicated elsewhere.

Another participant referred to the debate on participatory governance at the recent Africities9 (Kisumu, Kenya, 17–20 May 2022). That called for input from many organizations to make proposals that guide the state.

He also referred to the IPC as a successful model, as exemplified by its role in developing the rural-urban transformation guidelines. That non-binding policy instrument now has the support of many states and is used as policy guidance at the country level, where participation is poor.

¹ Including Advisory Groups on [urban planning](#), [search and rescue](#), [science and technology](#), [energy](#), etc.



Figure 4: Edmundo Werna, speaking from his ILO experience during the discussion. Source: HIC-HLRN.

Closing

Yolande Hendler summarized the proceedings and observations from the floor, issuing a pledge to make HIC a vehicle for constructive input to UN-Habitat operations and governance, in general, and toward a working SEM, in particular, after the anticipated EB decisions and Habitat Assembly resolution at its second quadrennial session in 2023 to launch the process of stakeholder self-organization.

Participants:

No.	Name		Organisation	Email
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22.	Carla	Rodrigues	Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular Argentina)	
23.	Siraj	Sait	Univ. of East London/SAGE/AGGI	
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