



Integrating the engagement of local governments and stakeholders in UN HABITAT

Statement of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) and Global Taskforce (GTF)

October 22, 2018

We, the 17 Partner Constituent Groups gathered in the multi-stakeholder partnership platform, the General Assembly of Partners (GAP)¹ and the local government constituency gathered in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF)² believe that

- **commitments to leave no one behind requires courage, commitment, and capacity to produce dialogue and engage those that development has left behind or ignored. Civil society actors stand committed to facilitate this. However to fulfill this obligation and commitment we call for or the opening of new spaces and protocols for such engagement.**
- **full-fledged collaboration and policy consultation with local governments and constituency-based stakeholders will be key to successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the relevant SDGs in Agenda 2030.**
- **mechanisms will need to be defined to ensure that the most vulnerable and the closest sphere of government to the communities shape the local and national agendas in which the 21st century development framework is to be translated.**

In particular, we call on the member states in relation to the “new” UN Habitat to:

- **Create specific spaces for representation, timely consultation and substantive inputs for local governments and constituency-based stakeholders, in UN Habitat governance structures as they emerge to engage in dialogue with member states on policy and on programmatic matters;**
- **Develop an inter-active high level stakeholder engagement structure within UN Habitat to involve local governments and stakeholders in the development and implementation of UN Habitat policies, publications, programs, and convenings.**

¹ These are GAP’s Partner Constituent Groups (in alpha order as all have equal standing in this multi-stakeholder platform) Current membership is 1,200 unique organizations representing 58,000 networks plus several hundred individuals:

1. Business and Industry
2. Children and Youth
3. Civil Society
4. Farmers
5. Foundations and Philanthropies
6. Grassroots
7. Indigenous Peoples
8. Local Authorities and Subnational Governments
9. Media
10. Older Persons
11. Parliamentarians
12. Persons with Disabilities
13. Professionals
14. Research and Academia
15. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
16. Trade Unions and Workers
17. Women

² GTF represents hundreds of local and regional governments around the globe. It has convened World Assemblies of Local and Regional governments.



Integrating the engagement of local governments and stakeholders in UN HABITAT

Detailed Statement

October 22, 2018

Our shared vision

We, the 17 Partner Constituent Groups gathered in the multi-stakeholder partnership platform, the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) and the local government constituency gathered in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) share a common vision on the value of stakeholders' expertise and knowledge in the preparation, crafting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Global Agendas and in particular the New Urban Agenda. This vision is informed by decades of experience with UN Habitat and its predecessors and participation and implementation of the outcomes of Habitat conferences. Building on this valuable background and cognizant of the pace and trajectory of today's growth of cities and human settlements, we recognize the need to innovate new forms and functions of engagement to ensure that we bring these lessons to bear and do our part to contribute to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN development frameworks. In particular, we advocate a strong focus on achieving policy coherence and applying an integrated and balanced approach to territorial development encompassing heightening the potential of urban and rural areas to achieve the full range of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

We share the view that the ambitious and transformative global agendas adopted throughout 2015 and 2016 necessitate a strong focus on addressing the urban challenges and making use of the full potential of the urban opportunity. We agree that the pace, scale and implication of urbanization need to be addressed if the 2030 Agenda and other associated global agreements are to be achieved for which the specificity provided in the New Urban Agenda is instrumental.

As multi-stakeholder platforms and longstanding Habitat partners we appreciate the ongoing efforts to strengthen UN Habitat as a vital instrument to achieve the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which we consider a vital accelerator of the global agendas as a whole.

Our commitment to a strong UN HABITAT

We welcome the proposal to enhance the strategic and political framework under which UN Habitat shall function by providing a universal and intergovernmental membership to its Assembly as well as an Executive Board that will allow for greater and timely engagement of member-states in the work of the organization.

We commend the recommendation of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Strengthening of UN Habitat advising that the agency should "seek the active engagement of local authorities and other stakeholders in accordance with the "Stakeholder Engagement Policy" currently being discussed." We realize that much remains to be decided to streamline the governance structure of UN Habitat to avoid undue complexity and costly duplication.

As stakeholders, we recommend our inclusion in the process of creating the Stakeholder Engagement Policy. We believe and hope you concur, that policies affecting the relationship of stakeholders to UN Habitat and the implementation of the SDGs should be co-produced in order to develop strong, trusting, and transparent relationships that are the foundation of effective engagement.



In this light, we look forward to the forthcoming resolution to establish an effective governing structure and to making our contribution to making UN Habitat fit for purpose in its policy and programmatic aspects. We recognize that achieving the objectives of UN Habitat's operation, especially aligned with the New Urban Agenda, within its normative framework as a UN-chartered specialized organization called for the cooperation of multiple partners. Accordingly, we recall the recommendations of the Report of the Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance Effectiveness of UN Habitat stating that the success of UN-Habitat's role depends on acknowledging governments at different levels, but also the many non-state actors critical to balanced territorial development, including civil society and private sector.

The active participation of stakeholders during the Habitat III process, the successful sessions of the World Urban Forum, the very creation of the General Assembly of Partners and the unprecedented participation of local governments through the General Assembly of Local and Regional Governments are testimony to the capacity of UN Habitat to mobilise partners. However, if the principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda, Agenda 2030 and associated global agreements are to be taken seriously, we call on member states to take seriously the implementation of these essential partnerships that must perform in ways not seen under previous arrangements.

We are convinced that the member states are at a critical moment having the opportunity to enhance the level and quality of the involvement and the activities that emanate from their partnership. As the Independent Panel's report suggests "Partnerships predicated on a mission of genuine inclusion, not just the delivery of participation as a project deliverable, imply a seat at the table for stakeholders who might not historically have occupied that position." The Panel further advises that "as the levels of government most engaged with addressing exclusion on the ground, local and regional governments must be high on the list of UN-Habitat's partnerships."

We further agree with the UN Secretary General's report on the UN Reform that if the Global Agendas are to be achieved the "UN development system will need to respond to national demands for "inclusive alliances and participatory processes that take account of the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded". This implies "a need to give priority to partners that share this commitment to the vulnerable and excluded, and that have experience and proven successes to bring to the table."

Our commitment and recommendations

However, merely sitting at the table is not enough. Meaningful contribution also calls for a commitment to the integrated approach to sustainable development envisioned in the UN reforms. We are at the disposal of member states and UN Habitat to engage in exchanges about the format and content of the "Stakeholder Engagement Policy" currently under consideration, contributing the experience of our constituencies in stakeholder platforms to help shape a role for stakeholders that can support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030 and associated global agreements.

Building on our pledge to leave no one behind and our active contributions to the Habitat III process, we are committed to:

- Give a greater voice to the most vulnerable and excluded;
- Give a greater voice to women's experiences and resources for achieving the New Urban Agenda
- Translate the global policies in local knowhow and experiences;
- Ensure greater local ownership and efficient local design and implementation;



- Facilitate a shift from **mere** engagement to **active collaboration**;
- Provide evidence and experienced based advice to the work and programmes of UN Habitat;
- Promote the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and have its review among the constituencies we represent.

Building on the recommendations of the Independent Panel, Open Ended Working Group and the ongoing discussions among member states, we call for:

- Creating specific spaces for regular consultation for local governments and stakeholders, respectively and together, to develop and share their inputs, proposals and presentation to share with the eventual governing structure of UN Habitat. These consultation mechanisms also would engage in substantive dialogue with the governing body or bodies of UN Habitat policy and programmatic matters, including but not limited to New Urban Agenda alignment.
- Assuring that the stakeholder engagement policies now in development encompass UN Habitat's regional offices
- Ensuring the active participation of the local governments and the stakeholders in the deliberations of the Assembly building on existing rules 64 and 65 of the rules of procedure;
- Convening regularly scheduled sessions of local governments and stakeholders to develop inputs and representations well in advance of the Habitat Assembly that could be facilitated by GAP and the GTF;
- Creating or strengthening Specialized Advisory Committees on Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Older Persons, and Slum Dwellers;
- Developing specific policies and programmatic actions resulting from the consultations which would be put in place counting on the advice and active involvement of relevant stakeholders;
- For the World Urban Forum, enhancing the involvement of local governments and stakeholders in the inputs, including the pre-WUF assemblies, format, structure of the World Urban Forum and developing an inclusive worldwide campaign to promote engagement at local, national and regional levels in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The pattern for future development will be set by this generation and it will be our shared responsibility to assure that the era of urbanization is characterized by inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities. Cities that are inclusive, well planned and home to all their inhabitants, with adequate and inclusive services. Cities that minimize their environmental impact and are part of balanced territories that promote urban rural synergies and allow residents to live happy lives.

In the spirit of collaboration across the three pillars of the UN Charter that traditionally guides our inputs, we local governments and stakeholders that traditionally guides our inputs, we the stakeholders and local governments gathered in GAP and the GTF remain at your disposal to contribute to further discussions that can yield effective means of engagement toward strengthening UN Habitat and the implementation of-