

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 housing¹ 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;
 - (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.

¹ "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==>.