

Ninth meeting of the ad hoc working group on the stakeholder engagement policy

Statement by Neil Khor

Part A: Presentation on the Current Accreditation Practice at UN-Habitat

Excellencies, stakeholders, and colleagues,

The UN-Habitat Assembly (UNHA) rules 66-69 of the rules of procedure provides for participation of non-members, particularly intergovernmental organisations and related entities, local authorities, other Habitat Agenda Partners, and Non-Governmental Organisations in UN-Habitat Assembly meetings. Additionally, Executive Board rule 17.3 provides, when appropriate, for participation in its deliberations on matters that relate to their activities of intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly.

In the absence of a stakeholder engagement policy and related accreditation procedure, the existing accreditation decisions will apply based on Governing Council Resolutions 19/8 and 26/7. These procedures were used to accredit stakeholders to the 27th session of the Governing Council, and subsequently the First session of the UN-Habitat Assembly. Member states in UN-Habitat Governing Council Resolution 19/8 of 9 May 2003 in the following operative paragraphs:

1. Decides to reconfirm, on request, the accreditation to the Governing Council of local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners that were accredited to Habitat II and the special session of the General Assembly for overall review and appraisal of implementation of the Habitat Agenda;
3. Decides also that accreditation shall be automatically granted, on request, to non-governmental organizations, including other Habitat Agenda partners, which are in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council;
4. Decides further that other Habitat Agenda partners referred to in rule 65 of the rules of procedure that were not accredited according to operative paragraphs 1 and 3 above may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited on an ad hoc basis to a session of the Governing Council: the Executive Director shall submit the list of such partners to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for approval on a no-objection basis by final decision of the Committee, and to Governments not represented on the Committee of Permanent Representatives for their consideration, 10 weeks in advance of the Governing Council session.

Additionally, member states in Governing Council Resolution 26/7 of 12 May 2017 operative paragraph:

1. Decides to reconfirm, upon request, the accreditation to the Governing Council of the stakeholders that were accredited to Habitat III. The same resolution provides for development of a stakeholder engagement policy and reformulation of accreditation procedure.

Altogether 162 organisations were accredited to UNHA, 45 through ad hoc accreditation, and 117 were reconfirmed upon request either as being in consultative status with ECOSOC or accredited to Habitat II or Habitat III. During the inter-sessional period, a total of 55 organisations attended the various sessions of the Executive Board as observers. The secretariat would also like to share the accreditation experience at the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board in the ensuing period. In 2019, 45 organizations were granted ad hoc accreditation for engagement in the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, sessions of the Executive Board and Committee of Permanent Representatives valid from May 2019 to May 2023.

Based on past experience we have not received any objection to participation of an organization in UN-Habitat intergovernmental meeting by a Member State.

Challenges

1. Stakeholders can only apply for accreditation once every four years as the current procedures do not provide for continuous accreditation process. This is a disincentive especially to organizations not accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly that may wish to participate in the sessions of the Executive Board and the meeting of the Committee of Permanent representatives. A more streamlined accreditation process would allow the secretariat to better support active stakeholders and enable them to engage more effectively in intergovernmental meetings.
2. Reconfirmation upon request of organisations accredited to Habitat II, the special session of the General Assembly on review of implementation of the Habitat Agenda, Habitat III, and automatic accreditation upon request of organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC does not allow the Secretariat to check for relevance of organisations to UN-Habitat mandate and their competence in the areas under discussion by the governing bodies. Yet some organisations have not been in contact with UN-Habitat since 1996, 2001 or 2016 for example. There is need for verification of relevance and competence possibly through submission of periodic reports to the Secretariat. Alternatively, these organisations should reapply for accreditation.
3. The accreditation procedures refer to Governing Council Sessions and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the then governing bodies, without recognition of the Executive Board and the UN-Habitat Assembly. This is indeed a cause to revise the accreditation procedures to align with the current governing bodies.

Thank you for your attention, and I welcome any questions you may have.

Part B. Presentation on ECOSOC Accreditation

Excellencies, stakeholder representatives, and colleagues,

I am honoured to speak to you today about the ECOSOC process of granting consultative status. As we all know, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a principal body of the United Nations that coordinates the economic and social work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. One of the ways it does this is through the granting of consultative status to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which allows these organizations to engage with the UN and contribute to its work. The guidelines for NGO consultative status with the United Nations are contained in ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31.

There are three types of consultative status: General, special and roster. The consultative status process is a rigorous one, as it is designed to ensure that only organizations that can make a valuable contribution to the UN's work are granted consultative status. Organizations must demonstrate their commitment to the UN's goals and principles of the UN Charter, as well as their ability to provide expert information or public opinion and advice on matters related to their field of competence.

Criteria:

1. Applying organization's activities must be relevant to the work of ECOSOC,
2. The NGO must have been in existence (officially registered) for at least 2 years to apply,
3. The NGO must have a democratic decision-making mechanism,
4. The major portion of the organization's funds should be derived from contributions from national affiliates, individual members, or other non-governmental components.

Supporting documents

1. Copy of constitution/charter and/or statutes/by-laws and amendments to those documents (pursuant to paragraph 10 of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31).
2. Copy of certificate of registration. According to resolution 1996/31 an organization "should attest that it has been in existence for at least two years as at the date of receipt of the application by the Secretariat". Please provide a copy of the registration paper or, if your country does not require registration, please provide other proof of existence.
3. Copy of most recent financial statement and annual report.
4. Optional: Copy of examples of your publications and recent articles or statements.
5. Optional: Organization chart (if available).

The process begins with an application, which is reviewed by the NGO Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. If the application is deemed complete and meets the criteria, it is then referred to the Committee on NGOs for further review. The committee, which is made up of 19 member states, conducts a thorough evaluation of the organization's qualifications and activities. After this, the committee makes a recommendation to the ECOSOC, which then makes a final decision on granting consultative status.

It is important to note that consultative status is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process. Organizations that are granted status must continue to meet the criteria and demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the UN's goals and principles. Organisations with general or special consultative status must also submit quadrennial reports on their activities and provide information on how they are contributing to the UN's work.

The ECOSOC consultative status process is a crucial mechanism for the UN to engage with civil society and ensure that the voices of NGOs are heard in the international arena. I urge all organizations that are interested in contributing to the UN's work to consider applying for consultative status. I also remind all organizations that have been granted consultative status to continue to meet the criteria and stay engaged with the UN's work.

Thank you for your attention.