

HABITAT PROFESSIONALS FORUM

Terms of Reference

Approved April 1, 2022

1.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE PROTOCOL

- 1.1 This Terms of Reference defines the role and governance for the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 1.2 This Terms of Reference, and future iterations thereof, shall come into effect upon approval, by majority vote of the Member Organizations during an online or in-person (or a combination thereof) Assembly Meeting or by Special Vote.
- 1.3 This Terms of Reference shall be reviewed, commonly understood, and implemented by all Member Organization Representatives.
- 1.4 If any section of the Terms of Reference is found to be at variance with any regulation, policy, or practice of UN-Habitat, said regulation, policy, or practice shall govern.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **“Associate Member Organization”** - An organization that does not meet the full Member Organization requirements of the Habitat Professionals Forum. However, their regular attendance and participation in activities and initiatives assists the Habitat Professionals Forum in achieving its Purpose and Functions. An Associate Member Organization is non-voting.
- 2.2 **“Civil Society Organization”** – Non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations. While these organizations can be international in nature (as applicable to the Habitat Professionals Forum), they must have not-for-profit status, and adhere to the laws and taxation requirements of the Country in which their secretariat is permanently registered.
- 2.3 **“External Organization”** – An organization that is not a Member Organization or Associate Member Organization of the Habitat Professionals Forum. They might be invited to participate in meetings, events, working groups, or other activities for their expertise, education, capacity/resource assistance, and/or advocacy purposes. They do not vote on the Habitat Professional Forums business.
- 2.4 **“Habitat Professionals Forum”** - The Habitat Professionals Forum was established in 1999 under the auspices of UN-HABITAT as an inter-disciplinary partnership of Human Settlement Professionals and UN HABITAT. The Habitat Professionals Forum was established to promote the delivery of sustainable urbanization and equitable human settlements development. It is a voluntary affiliation of international associations of Human Settlements Professions which are democratic, non-profit, non-political, and non-governmental. They are also engaged in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainable urban development.

- 2.5 **“Human Settlement Professionals”** – Professionals whose occupation involves places where people live, work, and recreate. Human Settlement refers to the totality of human community with all the social, economic, material, organizational, economic, environmental, spiritual, and cultural elements that sustain it.
- 2.6 **“International”** – existing, occurring, or operating between two or more nations (country or territory). In relation to membership in the Habitat Professionals Forum:
- 2.6.1 A Member Organization is considered international when it:
- a) Is an umbrella organization, where it is essentially a global organization of organizations; and
 - b) It has a permanent head office in a fixed location, registered in one country, and represents organizations from two or more nations.
- 2.6.2 An Associate Member Organization is considered international when it:
- a) Is an organization with global individual and professional membership; and
 - b) It has a permanent head office in a fixed location, registered in one country, and represents organizations from two or more nations.
- 2.7 **“Member Organization”** – An organization that meets the full Membership requirements of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 2.8 **“Member Organization Representative”** – the primary representative and main contact of the Member Organization who participates in the business of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 2.9 **“New Urban Agenda”** – The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016. The New Urban Agenda is an action-oriented document that mobilizes Member States and other key stakeholders to drive sustainable urban development at the local level. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda contributes to the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.
- 2.10 **“Non-governmental Organization”** – A non-profit group that operates independently of any government body.
- 2.11 **“Official Membership List”** – The official list of active Member Organizations (and their primary representatives) of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 2.12 **“Recognized Formal Relationship with UN-Habitat”** - An organization that is accredited to the:
- a) UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – Consultative Status; or
 - b) UN-Habitat Assembly; or
 - c) UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (i.e., Habitat III).

- 2.13 **“Special Vote”** – A vote held when an important issue or item needs to be decided on by the Member Organizations outside of the Habitat Professionals Forum biennial Assembly Meeting. Important issues or items may include, but are not limited to, governance and operations of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 2.14 **“Sustainable Development Goals”** - The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.

3.0 PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE HABITAT PROFESSIONALS FORUM

- 3.1 The purpose of the Habitat Professionals Forum is to provide support to UN-Habitat in promoting the delivery of sustainable urbanization and equitable human settlements development.
- 3.2 The Habitat Professionals Forum provides this support to UN-Habitat by carrying out the following functions:
- 3.2.1 Developing opportunities for synergy and partnership between Human Settlements Professionals and UN-Habitat, and to engage as a consultative group for UN-Habitat.
 - 3.2.2 Providing expertise, knowledge, and evidence-based solutions on urbanisation, which contributes to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and to sustainable urban development initiatives in general.
 - 3.2.3 To promote and disseminate professional practices in the field of human settlements and to implement the New Urban Agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals. The HPF has a specific focus on SDG-11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, through shared learning, advocacy and awareness-raising, training, and evaluation.
 - 3.2.4 To promote the establishment of common values and ethical standards for professional practice in the field of human settlements.
 - 3.2.5 To advocate for:
 - 3.2.5.1 Professional capacity and learning in the field of human settlements;
 - 3.2.5.2 Development of the necessary knowledge, skills, and exchange of experience amongst professionals, policymakers, and elected officials;
 - 3.2.5.3 General understanding for the public to support of sustainable, resilient, safe, and inclusive urban development, especially integration into global, regional, subregional, and national development agendas; and
 - 3.2.5.4 Concrete actions around urbanisation issues with other UN-Habitat agenda partners, and to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of UN-Habitat flagship programmes.
 - 3.2.6 To enhance partnerships, exchange, and dialogue between and within the global network of Human Settlements Professionals and cross-sectoral alliances.
 - 3.2.7 To contribute to and advise on UN-Habitat policy initiatives, debates, and agendas.

4.0 MEMBERSHIP

Member Organizations

- 4.1 A Member Organization shall be:
 - 4.1.1 International;
 - 4.1.2 A Civil Society Organization;
 - 4.1.3 In a Recognized Formal Relationship with UN-Habitat (as defined in 2.10):
 - 4.1.3.1 An organization that has:
 - a) UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – Consultative Status; or
 - b) UN-Habitat Assembly accreditation; or
 - c) UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (i.e., Habitat III) accreditation.
 - 4.1.4 In operation at an international level for 5 or more years and have the appropriate resources to make a meaningful contribution (i.e., secretariat support, regular meeting attendance, participation in working groups, etc.) to the purpose and functions of the Habitat Professions Forum; and
 - 4.1.5 Either organized to promote or active in promoting the interests and activities of Human Settlements Professionals working in the public, not-for-profit, and private sectors while supporting sustainable urban development.
- 4.2 Member Organization’s responsibilities include:
 - 4.2.1 Ensure that the Membership List is current by updating the Habitat Professional Forum’s Secretariat with any changes to organizational contact information, including new representatives.
 - 4.2.2 Have representation at all Habitat Professionals Forum meetings. If the primary representative is unable to attend, they shall send a secondary representative. If a Member Organization misses a full year of consecutive meetings, despite being contacted by the Chair or Co-chair, they will be considered inactive and removed from the Official Membership List.
 - 4.2.3 Provide volunteers from their organizations to populate Working Groups, in addition to other Habitat Professionals Forum activities and initiatives.
- 4.3 Members Organization Representatives can present for the Habitat Professionals Forum at International Professional Human Settlement Events. To do so, the Member Organization Representative:
 - 4.3.1 Will notify the Chair, Co-Chair, and the UN-Habitat Focal Point of the event and confirm their attendance.
 - 4.3.2 Shall ensure that their representation at the event aligns with the purpose and functions of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
 - 4.3.3 Will promote the Habitat Professionals Forum participation in the event on social media and through the communication channels of their organization.
 - 4.3.4 Will provide a report and present on the outcomes of the event at a future Habitat Professionals Forum meeting.
- 4.4 Member Organizations can use the Habitat Professionals Forum logo for the purposes of joint events, agreements, initiatives, and social media purposes.

Associate Member Organizations

- 4.5 An Associate Member Organization shall be:
 - 4.5.1 International;
 - 4.5.2 A Civil Society Organization;
 - 4.5.3 In operation at an international level for two or more years and have the appropriate resources to make a meaningful contribution (i.e., regular meeting attendance, participation in working groups, etc.) to the purpose and functions of the Habitat Professions Forum; and
 - 4.5.4 Either organized to promote or active in promoting the interests and activities of Human Settlements Professionals working in both the public and private sectors and supporting sustainable urban development.
- 4.6 Associate Members Organizations are non-voting on the business of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 4.7 The Habitat Professionals Forum Chair and Co-Chair positions are not available to Associate Member Organizations.
- 4.8 Associate Member Organizations are permitted to Chair, Co-Chair, and participate in working groups.
- 4.9 Associate Member Organization responsibilities include:
 - 4.9.1 Ensure that the Membership List is current by updating the UN-Habitat Administration with any changes to organizational contact information, including new representatives.
 - 4.9.2 Have representation at all Habitat Professionals Forum meetings. If the primary representative is unable to attend, they shall send a secondary representative. If an Associate Member Organization misses a full year of consecutive meetings, despite being contacted by the Chair or Co-chair, they will be considered inactive and removed from the Official Membership List.
 - 4.9.3 Provide volunteers from their organizations to populate Working Groups, in addition to other Habitat Professionals Forum activities and initiatives.

Application for Membership:

- 4.10 Organizations wishing to become Members shall notify the Chair, with a letter of intent and all supporting documentation, at least two weeks before a regular meeting.
- 4.11 The letter of intent must include:
 - 4.11.1 Proof of registration as a Civil Society Organization, along with the address of a permanent, fixed location, head office;
 - 4.11.2 A copy of a recent annual report or reference to a website link where it can be found;
 - 4.11.3 Information on membership (types of professionals and international reach);
 - 4.11.4 Governance structure information;
 - 4.11.5 A statement on ability to provide in-kind secretariat support (for Member Organizations);
 - 4.11.6 A statement on available resources for working groups, activities, and initiatives; and
 - 4.11.7 A commitment to regular participation in meetings and attendance at the World Urban Forum Assembly meeting.

- 4.12 Membership approval shall be determined by a majority vote of the current Member Organizations.
- 4.13 The Habitat Professionals Forum does not substitute for, or replace, existing Organizations. Nor does it detract from the autonomy or initiatives of its Member Organizations or Associate Member Organizations but exists to implement the Purpose and Functions defined in Section 3.0 Purpose and Functions of The Habitat Professionals Forum.

5.0 OPERATION

- 5.1 The Habitat Professionals Forum will hold online Regular Meetings as often as necessary, but at least once every two months, with an in-person Assembly during the World Urban Forum during each second year.
 - 5.1.1 Following the lead of UN-Habitat, the World Urban Forum Habitat Professionals Forum Assembly and Roundtable may be held exclusively online or in a hybrid online/in-person format.
- 5.2 Quorum at Assembly Meetings is 50% + 1 of Member Organizations.
- 5.3 Where possible, accommodations shall be made at any in-person Regular Meetings, Assemblies, or events for Member Organizations and Associate Member Organizations to call-in or to participate online/virtually.
- 5.4 The purpose of a Regular Meeting is:
 - 5.4.1 To be briefed on any relevant information/activities from UN-Habitat;
 - 5.4.2 To share reports on the conduct and activities of the Habitat Professionals Forum since it last met; and
 - 5.4.3 To review progress and to plan future activities and responsibilities, while identifying any necessary resources.
- 5.5 If a Special Vote needs to occur:
 - 5.5.1 A Special Vote can occur online/virtually only or in-person (with online/virtual participation) during a Regular Meeting.
 - 5.5.1.1 If a Special Vote occurs online/virtually only and outside of a Regular Meeting, the results shall be shared within 7 days following the voting period.
 - 5.5.2 At least 30 days-notice shall be provided and shall include the subject or question to be voted on, along with supporting reports or materials;
 - 5.5.3 A majority, 50% + 1 of total voting Member Organizations, must be achieved in the results for the special vote to pass or fail;
 - 5.5.4 If a vote is tied or fails, additional feedback on the item/document will be collected following the meeting/voting event. The item/document will then be revised, and a new Special Vote will be scheduled.
 - 5.5.5 Proxy votes will be permitted for any in-person only Special Votes where online/virtual participation is not available.
- 5.6 From time-to-time External Organizations might be invited to participate in meetings, events, working groups, or other activities. An External Organization:
 - 5.6.1 May be invited for expertise, education, capacity/resource assistance, or advocacy purposes.

- 5.6.2 Cannot vote on the Habitat Professional Forums' business.
- 5.7 The Habitat Professionals Forum will convene an open UN-Habitat Professionals Roundtable at each World Urban Forum or similar conferences (in-person or virtually) and at other UN-Habitat events wherever possible, including the UN-Habitat Assembly and its subsidiaries - the Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent Representatives meetings.
- 5.8 Through formal collaboration with UN-Habitat wherever possible, the Habitat Professionals Forum will propose and facilitate themed Networking and Side Events at each World Urban Forum for its Members, and Members will aim to coordinate proposed events. Events will consider participation both in-person and virtually.

6.0 THE EXECUTIVE

- 6.1 The Executive positions of the Habitat Professionals Forum shall include: Chair and Co-Chair.
- 6.2 The Executive will meet for planning, organizational, or governance reasons as needed.
- 6.3 The role of the Chair includes representing the Habitat Professions Forum:
 - 6.3.1 In official matters, functions, signing letters of significant importance, and in matters of public relations;
 - 6.3.2 To UN-Habitat;
 - 6.3.3 Attending UN-Habitat meetings that take place at the UN Office in Nairobi or elsewhere;
 - 6.3.4 At international professional human settlement events; and
 - 6.3.5 By engaging in social media activity, in collaboration with the Co-Chair, and Member Organizations.
- 6.4 The Chair will provide overall inclusive leadership in ensuring all the Habitat Professional Forums' business is conducted in an ethical, efficient, and effective manner, by:
 - 6.4.1 Creating agendas, moderating, and facilitating Regular Meetings and the Assembly using [*Robert's Rules of Order*](#) (or a comparable meeting facilitation method) for a motion, debate, and resolution approach.
 - 6.4.2 Ensuring that agendas are finalized and circulated at least a week in advance of a scheduled meeting.
 - 6.4.2.1 The Chair shall make a call for agenda items from Members, the Co-Chair, and UN-Habitat Focal Point prior to finalizing the agenda to be circulated.
 - 6.4.3 Implementing this Terms of Reference and the Habitat Professional Forums Operational Plan, in alignment with the UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan.
 - 6.4.4 Inviting External Organizations to meetings, events, working groups, and activities as deemed necessary.
 - 6.4.5 Reviewing and approving Regular and Assembly meeting minutes.
- 6.5 The Chair will work collaboratively with the Co-Chair, and UN-Habitat Focal Point to:
 - 6.5.1 To coordinate regular meetings and the Assembly, including the development of meeting agendas and outcomes.
 - 6.5.2 Ensure the Co-Chair is continually briefed on business (verbal or email).
 - 6.5.3 Lead and organize the Habitat Professional Forums' Networking, Side Events, and Roundtables at the World Urban Forum.

- 6.5.4 Ensure that there is an individual appointed to record events and outcomes if the UN-Habitat Administration is unable to attend.
- 6.6 The Role of the Co-Chair Includes:
 - 6.6.1 Fulfilling the role of the Chair in their absence.
 - 6.6.1.1 This includes representation and attendance at official UN-Habitat events.
 - 6.6.2 Representing the Habitat Professionals Forum at International Professional Human Settlement Events.
 - 6.6.3 Supporting the Chair in leading and organizing the Habitat Professional Forums' Networking, Side Events, and Roundtables at the World Urban Forum.
 - 6.6.4 Leading the collaboration for the Habitat Professional Forum's operational governance activities, such as the maintenance of these Term of Reference and the development, review, and implementation of the Habitat Professional Forums' Operational Plan (to occur in alignment with UN-Habitat's strategic planning process).
 - 6.6.5 Engaging in social media activity representing the Habitat Professionals Forum
- 6.7 The Chair and Co-Chair shall:
 - 6.7.1 Work together and with UN-Habitat Administration to achieve the aims and objectives of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
 - 6.7.2 Work collaboratively with the Membership.
 - 6.7.3 Seek to move the Habitat Professionals Forum forward in achieving its Purposes and Functions as set out above.
- 6.8 The Chair can delegate any of their duties to the Co-Chair or other Member Organization Representatives.
 - 6.8.1 Delegation shall first be made to the Co-Chair. If the Co-Chair is unavailable or their Member Organization does not have the needed accreditation for an event (for official UN-Habitat events, appropriate accreditation will be required), delegation shall then be made to another Member Organization Representative.
- 6.9 The Chair, Co-Chair, and Members shall not have any financial interest in their Habitat Professionals Forum activities and are required to align with UN-Habitat's professional usual code of conduct regarding conflict of interest, transparency, and professional conduct.

7.0 WORKING GROUPS

- 7.1 Voluntary ad-hoc Working Groups may be established to complete needed projects or initiatives for the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 7.2 Size of Working Group membership shall be determined by the scope of the project or initiative.
- 7.3 To promote the inclusive aims of the Habitat Professionals Forum and to provide greater opportunities to harness the professional experience and skills of the membership, the Chair and Co-Chair should not also be the Chair or Co-Chair of a Working Group.

8.0 HABITAT PROFESSIONALS FORUM SECRETARIAT AND UN-HABITAT'S ROLE

- 8.1 UN-Habitat identifies a Focal Point for the Habitat Professionals Forum, who attends Regular Meetings, the Assembly, and if invited, the Working Groups. The Focal Point does not have voting rights.

- 8.2 The role of the Focal Point includes:
 - 8.2.1 Ensure the liaison between the Habitat Professionals Forum and UN-Habitat, through regular communication.
 - 8.2.2 Maintain the Habitat Professionals Forums' page on the UN-Habitat website that promotes exchange and dialogue between Human Settlements Professionals.
 - 8.2.3 Ensuring that important documents, such as the Official Membership List, Terms of Reference, and Strategic/Operational plans are stored in UN-Habitat records system.
 - 8.2.4 Recording events and outcomes for the Habitat Professionals Forum at the World Urban Forum.
- 8.3 The Secretariat of the Habitat Professionals Forum is provided by UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Chair's Member Organization.
 - 8.3.1 The Chair's Member Organization provides this secretary function on an in-kind basis.
 - 8.3.2 The Chair's Member Organization integrates the UN-Habitat Secretariat to enhance the effectiveness of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 8.4 The role of the Secretariat (within the Chair's Member Organization) includes:
 - 8.4.1 Establishing the 2-year work plan of the Secretariat in collaboration with UN-Habitat Focal point.
 - 8.4.2 Maintaining the Official Membership list.
 - 8.4.3 Taking the minutes at Regular Meetings and submitting them for approval to the Chair.
 - 8.4.4 Reviewing and recommending new Members to the Habitat Professionals Forum.
 - 8.4.5 Ensuring all Members have access to relevant business materials.
 - 8.4.6 Working with the Chair and Co-Chair to ensure document control, including document storage in a central location (approved by UN-Habitat).
 - 8.4.7 Producing and coordinating content for the Habitat Professionals Forum website.
 - 8.4.8 Engaging in social media activity representing the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- 8.5 The Chair and the UN-Habitat Focal Point are responsible for agendas and meeting minute distribution.

9.0 ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

- 9.1 Elections for the Executive positions shall be by secret ballot and will be held online/virtually.
- 9.2 Each second year, and no less than 120 days before the first day of the respective World Urban Forum, a Nominating Committee of at least three (3) Member Organization representatives will be struck. It is encouraged that the Past Chair participate on this Committee.
- 9.3 The Nominating Committee is responsible for:
 - 9.3.1 Establishing the online/virtual election date(s).
 - 9.3.2 Establishing cut-off dates for candidate submissions.
 - 9.3.3 Determining if candidates have met submission requirements.
 - 9.3.4 No less than 30 days before the first day of the respective World Urban Forum, presenting the Member Organizations of the Habitat Professionals Forum with a full slate of nominees for the Chair and Co-Chair.
 - 9.3.5 Setting up the online/virtual vote, along with providing instructions for Member Organizations to select their preferred candidates.

- 9.3.6 Notifying the successful candidates for the Chair and Co-Chair positions.
- 9.4 Nominations Committee Members shall not be a candidate for any of the positions in the election.
- 9.5 Member Organizations putting forth candidates for Chair shall have:
 - 9.5.1 A minimum of 4 years of full membership with the Habitat Professionals Forum;
 - 9.5.2 Attended the last two and most recent World Urban Forums; and
 - 9.5.3 Evidence of active participation in Habitat Forum Working Groups, activities, and initiatives.
- 9.6 Member Organizations putting forth candidates for Co-Chair shall have:
 - 9.6.1 A minimum of 2 years of full membership with the Habitat Professionals Forum;
 - 9.6.2 Attended the last and most recent World Urban Forum; and
 - 9.6.3 Evidence of active participation in Habitat Forum Working Groups, activities, and initiatives.
- 9.7 The Chair and Co-Chair shall not be from the same Member Organization.
- 9.8 The Chair and Co-Chair shall have and show evidence of the minimum qualifications:
 - 9.8.1 Senior board leadership and chairing experience;
 - 9.8.2 Working knowledge of [*Robert's Rules of Order*](#) or a comparable meeting facilitation method;
 - 9.8.3 5 years of civil society board governance experience;
 - 9.8.4 Understanding of the purpose and function of the Habitat Professionals Forum, along with the UN system;
 - 9.8.5 Knowledge of strategic planning, operations planning, and project management;
 - 9.8.6 Positive presence and reputation on social media;
 - 9.8.7 Diplomatic skills and ability to clearly convey information in a balanced manner;
 - 9.8.8 Understanding of board dynamics and processes;
 - 9.8.9 Knowledge and application of conflict resolution and team building;
 - 9.8.10 Commitment to leading inclusively, listening effectively, and building consensus;
 - 9.8.11 Good standing and senior level experience within their Member Organization;
 - 9.8.12 Proven experience in speaking at international events; and
 - 9.8.13 Reputation of ethical behaviour in professional practice and personal life.
- 9.9 Candidates for the Chair and Co-Chair positions shall prepare a 1-page statement (maximum) of their experience and commitment, along with a short description of their intended actions to be undertaken during their 2-year term. This statement shall be accompanied by a 2-page (maximum) resume. Their candidature shall be supported by a 1-page letter from their respective Member Organization. The submission package shall be no more than 4 pages. Their candidacy package shall also be submitted in the timeframe and fashion outlined by the Nominating Committee.
- 9.10 The Chair and Co-Chair are elected for a period of 2 years, which can be renewed once through the election process for a second term. The newly elected Chair and Co-Chair take office at the end of the Habitat Professionals Forum Assembly Meeting that takes place at the World Urban Forum.

9.11 Each Member Organization has one vote for the Chair position and one vote for the Co-Chair position.

10.0 AMENDMENTS AND MONITORING

10.1 Any section of this Terms of Reference may be amended by resolution of the Habitat Professionals Forum Membership absolute majority.

10.2 These Terms of Reference shall be formally reviewed and potentially revised every 4 years.

END