

Cities Alliance

CHARTER

As adopted 7 April 2016

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I. Introduction

The Cities Alliance is a global partnership for poverty reduction and the promotion of cities in sustainable development.

- 1 In the last 20 years, the world urban population has grown from 2.25 billion to 3.5 billion. Most of this growth has occurred in developing countries. It is expected that it will reach 4.9 billion in 2030. At the same time, the annual urban growth rate is declining in many parts of the world.
- 2 Local governments have grown in importance in recent decades and their role is widely recognised, but their political, institutional and financial resources and powers do not match their mandate. Urban governance and decentralisation have progressed in all regions of the world to the benefit of urban dwellers. However, local government capacities remain underdeveloped in many countries, particularly in secondary cities, and there is enormous room for south-south and city-to-city cooperation for urban development.
- 3 Economically and culturally, cities are effective engines of growth and innovation allowing people to access a variety of job opportunities and personal development at large scale. However, especially in low income countries, many of these jobs are provided by the informal sector and decent work remains a challenge in many cities.
- 4 Cities, large and small, are also places of growing inequalities and sometimes of squalid poverty, in terms of both income poverty and inadequate access to shelter and basic services. But their neighbourhoods are often marked by human solidarities, community networks and citizen initiatives.
- 5 Gender-based inequalities deprive cities of a significant source of human potential while directly undermining the rights of women and men. These inequalities impact stability, inclusiveness and sustainability of urban development. However, women act as a major force of positive change in cities, promoting household economic resilience and more equitable decision making.

- 6 By their density, compact cities offer the potential for sustainable development and the efficient use of natural resources. Most cities, however, witness harmful environmental pollution hazards. They are a major contributor to, and victim of, climate change and related disasters. Sustainable urban development strategies should be matched by adequate investment and resources. The Cities Alliance is a global partnership for poverty reduction and the promotion of cities in sustainable development. It aims at supporting cities, local and national governments and their partners in addressing the above challenges to capture the gains of urbanisation and take advantage of the above opportunities, for the benefit of their citizens.

II. Cities Alliance Objectives

7 Cities Alliance is governed by three over-arching objectives:

- a) To strengthen and promote the role of cities in poverty reduction, and in sustainable development;
- b) To capture and strengthen the synergies between and among members and partners; and
- c) To improve the quality of urban development cooperation and lending.

III. Cities Alliance Vision

8 The Cities Alliance is primarily a vehicle for partnership, seeking to improve the quality and coherence of support being provided to city and national governments in the developing world, as well as the quality of members' own urban programmes. To this end, the Cities Alliance will not develop separate implementation capacity, but work through the existing capacity of its members, as well as other partners, to promote the vision of '***Sustainable Cities without Slums***'. To achieve this vision, the Cities Alliance will promote new partnerships between local and national government, slum dwellers, private foundations, the private sector, NGOs, knowledge institutions and other partners.

IV. Cities Alliance Mission

9 The Cities Alliance prioritises support to cities, local authorities, associations of local authorities and/or national governments that are committed to:

- a) Improving their cities, and local governance, for all residents;
- b) Adopting a long-term, comprehensive and inclusive approach to urban development;
- c) Implementing those reforms necessary to effect systemic change, and to achieve delivery at scale; and

d) Decentralising resources to empower local government.

V. Cities Alliance Activities

10 Support provided by the Cities Alliance falls within the following broad categories:

- a) Citywide and nationwide slum upgrading programmes;
- b) City development strategies; and
- c) National policies on urban development and local government.

11 Within these broad categories, Cities Alliance members and partners are able to respond to a range of developmental challenges, which are identified as priorities by the city or national government, slum dwellers, and other members or partners.

12 City development strategies are generally multi-sectoral and citywide, and can encompass a wide range of priorities on sustainable urban development, including subjects related to three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and ecological) as well as investments, governance systems and physical implementation.

13 Any city, national association of cities, or national government with its partners can approach the Cities Alliance for support, either through one or more members of the Cities Alliance, or through the Secretariat, which will attempt to identify appropriate member(s) to provide such support. Cities Alliance members may also apply for support. Cities Alliance will make specific efforts to increase the focus on least developed countries and secondary cities and mobilise the expertise of middle and higher income countries. Programmes of assistance by the Cities Alliance strive to reflect the priorities of the city and its residents, local government association and national government.

14 In general, the Cities Alliance offers support to meet its objectives, including the following types of activities, subject to the availability of resources:

a) Country Programmes

Longer-term programmatic support, at city and/or national scale;

b) Catalytic Projects

Shorter-term activities designed to catalyse change;

c) Knowledge activities

Activities designed to fill knowledge gaps and build capacity at local, national, regional and global levels; and

d) Communication support, and advocacy

Activities designed to improve awareness of relevant policies or activities, influencing policies and behaviour and contributing to dynamic local, national, regional and global debates.

VI. Membership of the Cities Alliance

15 Membership of the Cities Alliance is open to representatives from the following Constituencies, which will be represented in the Cities Alliance Assembly:

- a) National governments;
- b) Inter-governmental and Multi-lateral Institutions, International or Regional Financial Institutions and Development Banks;
- c) Associations of Local Governments;
- d) Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations;
- e) Private Sector and Foundations; and
- f) Universities, Research Centres and Knowledge Networks.

16 Membership of Cities Alliance is available to all organisations within these categories who are committed to the overarching objectives of the Cities Alliance of improving the role of cities in sustainable development and poverty reduction. In particular, Cities Alliance members:

- a) Provide long-term commitment to cities and urban development, including the role of cities in driving national poverty reduction;
- b) Promote equality in general, and gender equality in particular, and tackling the uneven consequences of urbanisation;
- c) Support decentralisation and strengthening the role of local government;
- d) Are committed to partnership and innovation, and the promotion of accountability, transparency and sustainability.

17 All members, and their nominees, are encouraged to participate in the activities of the Cities Alliance. Members may also propose activities that further the aims of the Cities Alliance. The Secretariat will broker and establish partnerships between different Members.

18 There are two categories of membership:

- a) Full Members, who participate in decision making and are eligible to serve on the Management Board; and
- b) Associate Members, who participate in the proceedings of the Cities Alliance.

19 Other organisations interested in Cities Alliance activities may be invited by the Assembly President, in consultation with the Secretariat, to attend specific Assembly sessions as Observers and to participate in particular policy sessions. Observer status is non-decision making.

20 Prospective Members of the Cities Alliance wishing to apply for membership of the Assembly will need to (i) be sponsored by 3 (three) existing Full Members of the Assembly; (ii) endorse the Cities Alliance Charter; and (iii) undertake to meet their financial contributions to the Cities Alliance Trust Fund.

21 All membership applications are reviewed by the Membership Sub-Committee of the Management Board for recommendation to the Management Board and ratification by the Assembly.

22 All full members make an annual financial contribution to the core funds of the Cities Alliance Trust Fund. The level of these contributions will be determined by the Management Board.

23 Members who do not make their financial contributions for two consecutive years will cease to be members of the Cities Alliance.

VII. Governance of the Cities Alliance

24 The Cities Alliance governance structure is composed of three structures:

- a) The Assembly;
- b) The Management Board (the Board); and
- c) The Secretariat.

a) The Cities Alliance Assembly

25 The Assembly comprises Full Members and Associate Members of the Cities Alliance, and is the sovereign body of the organisation.

26 The Assembly provides leadership and overall direction for the Cities Alliance and deliberates on sustainable urban development and related issues.

27 The Assembly meets at least once a year. Fifty per cent plus one of the membership constitutes a quorum of the Assembly. Decisions in the Assembly are taken by Full Members by consensus. Consensus means no objection to agreement, but does not preclude the ability to dissent on the record without objecting. The Assembly has the authority to form Working Groups.

28 The President of the Assembly is selected by the Members, and should be a person of substantial standing in the global community. The mandate of the President is three years, which may be renewed once. The President of the Assembly will not represent his/her organisation, but will act as an independent and neutral chair on behalf of the Cities Alliance.

29 The Assembly may appoint Senior Policy Advisors to advise the Assembly, Board and Secretariat. They are appointed for a mandate of three years, renewable once.

30 Primary Roles and Responsibilities of the Assembly:

- a) Adopt, and amend, the Charter;
- b) Adopt the Medium-Term Strategy of the Cities Alliance;

- c) Appoint members of the Management Board;
- d) Ratify the applications of new members;
- e) Approve the rules of procedure of the Assembly; and
- f) Review and evaluation the overall performance of the Cities Alliance.

b) The Management Board

31 The Assembly appoints the Management Board. The Management Board is accountable to the Assembly.

32 The Management Board comprises a maximum of fifteen members. Each constituency will be represented, including a United Nations system organisation. The overall allocation and balance of the Board is by decision of the Assembly.

33 The Management Board will appoint a Chairperson to serve for a period of three years.

34 Nominations for the post of Chairperson must be supported by a minimum of three members.

35 The Chairperson of the Management Board will not represent his/her organisation, but will act as an independent and neutral chair on behalf of the Cities Alliance. The Chairperson may be selected from outside the membership of the Cities Alliance.

36 If a chair is selected from amongst the Board Members, s/he will relinquish his/her representative role for that Member, which role will be performed by another representative of that Member.

37 A representative of the Senior Policy Advisors will participate *ex-officio* in meetings of the Management Board.

38 Management Board Members are appointed to serve terms up to three years, renewable once.

39 The Management Board provides operational oversight. It approves the business plan, annual work plans and budget of the Cities Alliance.

40 The Management Board meets as often as necessary, but no less than three times per year.

41 The Management Board shall establish standing committees to deal with Finance, and Membership.

c.) The Secretariat

42 Under the overall direction of the Director, the Secretariat shall implement the Cities Alliance Work Programme and manages its day-to-day operations. A primary function of the Secretariat is to actively facilitate the participation of members in the activities of the organisation. It also provides appropriate services to its Members, and generally facilitates the work of the partnership. All Cities Alliance activities shall be consistent with UN and UNOPS principles, policies and procedures.

43 The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) acts as the Trustee, provides the Secretariat, and administers the Cities Alliance financial resources. A representative of the Trustee may also participate *ex-officio* in meetings of the Management Board.

44 Cities Alliance Secretariat staff are UNOPS staff members recruited and managed according to UNOPS policies and procedures. The Secretariat may accept staff members on secondment from other organisations and through junior professional and similar programmes.

IV. General

45 Nothing in this Charter is intended to be a waiver of, or impair or limit, any privileges or immunities of any Member under its respective Articles of Agreement or equivalent documents, or any applicable law, all of which are expressly reserved.