



UN-HABITAT

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# UN-Habitat Guidelines on Social Media

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## Overview

In today's digital age, social media has become a cornerstone of communication, connecting individuals, communities, and organizations across the globe. Harnessing the potential of social platforms is essential for effectively disseminating information, fostering engagement, and driving impact.

Social media refers to Internet-based platforms that allow interaction with others online including Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Weibo, TikTok, etc.

Social media has a huge potential audience with Facebook having over 3 billion monthly active users and X over 556 million (as of January 2024).

Whether advocating for a cause, promoting initiatives, or building networks, mastering the art of social media is essential for achieving UN-Habitat's goals and driving positive change in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Which channel to use and what to post

It is important to look at each social media channel's characteristics, its strengths and main audience to decide which channel to use. Twitter, where tweets are limited to 280 characters but most are far shorter, is often used for sharing the latest news and quick updates whereas Facebook can feature longer stories about beneficiaries. UN-Habitat manages several accounts in various languages. Key accounts include:

- **UN-Habitat corporate social media**

Twitter: @UN-Habitat  
Facebook: @UN-Habitat  
Instagram: @UN-Habitat

- **Executive Director's social media:**

Twitter:  
Facebook:  
Instagram:

At UN-Habitat, the type of content that performs well in terms of engagement consists of innovative ideas/fun facts on thematic topics (for instance on climate and nature-based solutions), simple and straightforward graphics, video content uploaded directly to the platforms, and carousels.

Be selective about what content you link to from social media. If a link isn't necessary, don't use one.

Engagement is generally higher when posts are limited to two a day and spread throughout the day. Post scarcely and with intent.

**Twitter** works well to share concise updates and insights within the 280-character limit, using relevant hashtags to increase visibility. Engaging with other users' tweets fosters relationships and incorporating visuals like images, videos, and polls provides for more interactive content.

**LinkedIn** should be used to share corporate news, UN-Habitat updates, and thought leadership articles, using high-quality visuals like images and videos to capture attention. Use carousels for engaging explainer content. The promotion of UN-Habitat publications and reports works well on LinkedIn, as does the promotion of vacancies.

**Facebook** should be used to maintain audience engagement using a mix of informative and promotional content and high-quality visuals. Encourage discussions through comments, likes, shares, and polls.

**Instagram** should be used to focus on visually compelling content like high-quality photos, videos, and stories, maintaining a consistent aesthetic for brand identity. Use hashtags strategically and engage with the audience through comments, likes, and interactive features like polls and quizzes.

Messaging needs to be consistent, effective and positive. Our social media should be consistent across our platforms featuring a formal, friendly and energetic voice.

Social media posts need to be interesting and easy to understand. They should not contain jargon, UN or urban planning acronyms and as much as possible given space restrictions spell out acronyms and avoid UN specific terms.

Posts should not use SMS language, textspeak or similar abbreviated language (txt spk) – and follow UN language and style (English spelling, no honorifics, etc.)

Spell check all posts by drafting the post in a word processing software like Word and transferring.

Use plain, direct language to concisely explain the positive impact of a story, which can link to a relevant piece on the corporate website and clearly reflect UN-Habitat's role.

It is recommended that when submitting a story for the corporate website, you draft related social media posts to send at the same time.

Credit people/accounts for their intellectual property.

## Reputational risk

Social media can be a legal minefield in terms of copyright liability or re-sharing politically risky content which could open the organization up to spammers, trolls and negative publicity campaigns. A poorly worded tweet or incorrectly phrased Facebook reply can go viral and cause significant reputational damage.

This means the language used, photo choice, infographics and video content of every social media post must be edited and approved by another colleague before it is posted.

If any photo, video or link to a webstory or article or infographics is not fact checked or peer reviewed it should not be used. Accuracy and quality are the priorities rather than speed or quantity.

## Using photos and videos

Posts including images and videos often get more likes and views and are more likely to be shared. The video format is currently seen as the most engaging content on social media.

Use vivid, copyright-cleared photographs or compelling, short (two minutes or under) videos to show the work of UN-Habitat in the field. Videos with subtitles do very well.

Videos can be uploaded directly to the platform rather than posting a link so it will autoplay as people land on it while going through their feed. This leads to increased reach, engagement and exposure.

Do not use boring shots of people shaking hands or group shots of people at the end of a meeting. A photo of the city where the workshop is taking place or of the community the meeting will impact is preferable. If you must show the workshop, use an action shot of the workshop participants doing something interesting such as creating a map or looking at a water treatment system.

## Tagging

Tag and publicly acknowledge UN-Habitat project partners and donors when mentioning projects.

Research the correct tags, bearing in mind some organizations have different tags for different platforms.

Avoid tagging or @ mentioning people, Member States or partners who are not part of the project being posted about. This can seem opportunistic or creating spam.

## Emojis and hashtags

Use emojis very sparingly – they give some personality to a post, but may not be suitable for posting as UN-Habitat.

Use hashtags strategically. Hashtags should be used when tweeting about a UN-Habitat event/conference using the official hashtag (e.g., #WUF12, #UrbanOctober). More than two hashtags/@s in a post can make your post look like spam and audiences tend to ignore these posts. Avoid long hashtags.

## Event coverage/Live tweeting

Use the UN-Habitat Live Twitter account ([https://twitter.com/UN-Habitat\\_Live](https://twitter.com/UN-Habitat_Live)) to post numerous posts about an event or conference to avoid cluttering the main corporate channels and losing followers.

Don't rush to be the first to put out live content of an event. It is worth waiting to put out messaging that showcases the best features of the event with strong pictures and quotes.

Do not flood your primary account with event updates. Instead curate event highlights and rely on live tweeting through the UN-Habitat Live account.

Put in a request for access to the UN-Habitat Live account for event coverage two weeks before an event for a smooth handover.

## Privacy

Respect the privacy rights of colleagues, partners and beneficiaries, particularly when posting photos and videos from the field. Do not post information or images of beneficiaries, partners or colleagues without their permission. The photo consent form can be found in the UN-Habitat Guidelines on Photographs.

## Monitoring

UN-Habitat needs to be proactive in listening and responding to questions, opinions and comments from the online community in a timely fashion. Social media channels are interactive platforms and we should respond to any queries in a friendly yet professional tone. A staff member needs to regularly

monitor and respond to comments and this should be prioritized during peak campaign moments and big news events that could impact UN-Habitat's work or reputation.

- Prioritize monitoring influential accounts such as celebrities, journalists and digital influencers or where comments are more visible (e.g., Facebook comments over Twitter mentions).
- Direct messages are important as a key contact may use them to get in touch, but one can turn off Facebook messages to reduce the message volume burden.
- Use admin initials to sign off after responding to messaging for accountability within the team (e.g., "Thank you for your interest in this project. ^IM^").
- When possible, answer genuine questions with links to helpful information but it is not necessary to respond to every question or comment.
- Monitoring can pinpoint potential risks to UN-Habitat, the communities we work with and partners. Flag any unusual activity, allegations, criticism or comments which may put UN-Habitat's reputation at risk. Any threats or concerning comments that relate to security or the security of staff members or United Nations property should be reported immediately.

## Deleting vs hiding

On Facebook, if a comment or post is controversial but deleting it would be noted by the individual/s and further embolden/encourage them to comment more, consider hiding it. This way it will still be visible to the person who posted it and their friends but not to anyone else.

## Trolls and bots

Internet trolls are people who post inflammatory or off-topic messages – often with the aim of eliciting emotional responses.

Bots are automated accounts which perform simple and repetitive tasks that would be time-consuming, mundane or impossible for a human to perform.

- Don't feed them – they're often just looking for a reaction.
- Set up filters in Instagram and Facebook to ban profanity, automated bots and hateful messages.

- If there are a few comments, avoid one on one replies and consider doing one general comment stating UN-Habitat's position.

## Policy on page moderation

Where the social media platform allows, please add notes about how UN-Habitat intends to moderate the page. On Facebook, this should go on the "About" section under "General Information".

### Our policy

*The UN-Habitat Facebook page is meant to be an engaging and learning environment for those interested in urban issues to share ideas and to discuss UN-Habitat's work and sustainable urbanization initiatives worldwide. As a UN organization, our work is grounded in human rights. We support freedom of expression and encourage open discussion but this should also be a safe place for everyone to participate, free from harmful messages. We try to monitor all Facebook posts and please understand that we reserve the right to remove postings and photos that:*

*(1) are libellous, profane, defamatory, disparaging, hateful, harassing, threatening, or obscene; (2) violate another's copyright or intellectual property; (3) condones or promotes illegal activity; (4) are fraudulent, deceptive or misleading; (5) are otherwise sexual or offensive graphically or in tone; (6) contain spam or are intended to cause technical disruptions to this page; (7) are off topic; or (8) violate any local, state, federal, and/or international laws or regulations.*

*Please note that UN-Habitat does not endorse any opinions on this page not specifically posted by us. Additionally, UN-Habitat is not responsible for the accuracy of the claims, information, advice or comments posted by visitors of the page. UN-Habitat strongly encourages visitors to this page or those engaging with our content to respect fellow community members and to follow Facebook's Terms of Service. Anyone repeatedly posting material that falls into the above categories will be removed and/or banned from participating on this page.*

## Regional accounts

UN-Habitat social media accounts can operate only with the approval of the Media and Communications Section and relevant managers, and are subject to review, alteration, and deletion.

Seek approval from the Chief of Communications, Katerina Bezgachina ([ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org](mailto:ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org)),

and include in your request: the reason/rationale for opening the account; the strategy/goal for opening the account; the value added for the account and how it connects with UN-Habitat's global messaging; the target audience; the type of content that will be promoted; the frequency at which the channel is expected to be used; the language(s) used for the channel; the metrics of success; and how the channel will be sustained.

Unapproved accounts, including accounts that generate confusion or promote individual work without clear coherence and connection with UN-Habitat will not be allowed

Usernames must be approved by the Media and Communications Section and should only spell UN-Habitat as UN-Habitat or UNHABITAT.

UN-Habitat should never be registered as a "Non-governmental organization." It should be registered as an "International Organization," or "Organization".

If you make a mistake online please delete and alert the Media and Communications Section for support.

### **Use of personal social media**

A staff member's activity on personal social media, even when unrelated to official duties, may reflect on UN-Habitat and expose the United Nations to reputational risk. Even if a disclaimer is added, such as "views expressed are my own", a staff member's behaviour on social media must comply with the impartiality and conduct required from an international civil servant.

Any digital content posted or actions taken online (even in a limited community social media space) may be copied by others and reshared with the world. All online activities create a permanent record. Deleted content can be searched for and located.

Do not use a professional email address to set up personal social media accounts.

Respect the privacy of colleagues, partners and beneficiaries, particularly when posting photos and videos.

The use of the name and emblem of the United Nations to further personal or third party interests is prohibited.

Be aware that sharing and liking posts from other accounts could be interpreted as an endorsement of the facts and opinions these posts represent. If you are not sure whether their social media activity is consistent with your obligations as an international civil servant, consult your supervisor or the UN-Habitat Media and Communications Section. Always read over before posting to check the post is grammatically correct, properly spelt and could not be interpreted in any misleading way.

For more information on the personal use of social media, please read the [UN guidelines for the personal use of social media](#). You may also want to familiarize yourself with the policies on the [Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members](#); [Outside activities](#); and the [2023 Guidance on Political Activities](#) issued on iSeek by the UN Ethics Office.

### **Posting on main corporate accounts**

To request posting on the main corporate accounts, please refer to the SOP on Submitting Web Requests to the Media and Communications Section.