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# UN-Habitat Social Media Guidelines

## Overview

Social media is a crucial communication tool used by organizations around the world to highlight their work, their partnerships and mandate and to exchange directly with audiences. Social media refers to internet-based platforms that allow interaction with others online including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Weibo etc. Social media has a huge potential audience with Facebook having over 2.4 billion monthly active users and Twitter over 330 million.

## Which channel to use?

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 latest news and quick updates whereas Facebook can feature longer stories about beneficiaries. UN-Habitat has several accounts including in various languages. Key accounts include:

- **UN-Habitat corporate social media**  
Twitter: @UNHABITAT  
Facebook: @UNHABITAT  
Instagram: @unhabitat
- **Executive Director's social media:**  
Twitter: @MaimunahSharif  
Facebook: @UNHabitatMaimunah  
Instagram: maimunahsharif

## Content and style

- 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 far 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 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 ([www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)) 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. Video is currently seen as the most engaging content on social media.

- Use vivid, copyright cleared photographs or compelling, short (2 minutes or under) videos to show the work of UN-Habitat in the field. Videos with subtitles do very well.
- Video 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.

However they can be linked to UN-Habitat's Youtube account.

- 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 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. #WUF11, #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/UNHABITAT\\_Live](https://twitter.com/UNHABITAT_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 is in the Photo Guidelines).

## 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 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 borderline but deleting it would be noted by the individual/s and further embolden/enrage 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.

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

## Policy on page moderation:

Where the social media platform allows, please add notes about the 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 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.*

## Guide for regional accounts

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

### **Guidelines for staff 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 confirm to 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're not sure about whether their social media activity is consistent with your obligations as an international civil servant, consult your supervisor or the UN-Habitat Communication Section. Always read over before posting to check the post is grammatically correct, properly spelt and could not be interpreted in any misleading way.