



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# administrative circular

No. 2021/07

Date: 28 April 2021

## ENGAGEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE (EPC)

### I. Introduction

1. FAO envisions that its engagements with Non-State Actors (NSAs)<sup>1</sup> will bring strategic partnerships, scale up collective multi-stakeholder efforts, and bring country-owned and country-led innovative solutions to help FAO Members in achieving the SDGs, ultimately maximizing the positive impact for its beneficiaries.
2. FAO places emphasis on working as equal partners with civil society and the private sector in achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 1 (on eradicating poverty) and SDG 2 (on Zero Hunger), as well as other SDGs relevant to FAO's mandate.
3. The Organization-wide *Strategy on Partnerships*, the *Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025*, and *FAO's Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations* (collectively "the Strategies") provide the framework for engagements with NSAs. With regards to the private sector, the vision is to bring about transformative change and innovation, as well as measurable sustainable impact and benefits, to meet our aspiration of Leaving No One Behind, through sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, through private sector engagements.
4. FAO's engagements with NSAs can involve risks that need to be effectively managed. Expanding engagement with NSAs may entail more environmental, social and governance-related reputational risks, as well as financial and legal risks. Before engaging with any NSA, the Project Support Service Division (PSS) conducts due diligence and risk assessments to preserve the Organization's integrity, and, when applicable, submits its screening results to the Engagements and Partnerships Committee for decision.

### II. Responsibilities

5. The Engagements and Partnership Committee (EPC) shall be responsible for:
  - (i) Providing policy guidance on the Organization's approach on NSA engagements/partnerships, the implementation of the Strategies and the due diligence Framework for Risk Assessment/Management of Engagements (FRAME);

---

<sup>1</sup> Three categories of NSAs are identified: private sector; civil society; and academic and research organizations. These follow the definitions under the Organization-wide Strategy on Partnerships <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp169e.pdf>, and the specific ones for FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025 <http://www.fao.org/3/nd961en/nd961en.pdf>, and Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations <http://www.fao.org/3/l3443E/i3443e.pdf>.

- (ii) Reviewing prospective engagements and partnerships proposals referred to it and screened as Medium or High Risk by PSS, with a view to ensuring strategic, fit, measurable and sustainable impact, benefits out-weighting risks, as well as the adequacy of the risk mitigation and risk management measures proposed;
- (iii) Deciding, or making recommendations to the Director-General, as deemed appropriate by the Committee, if the Organization should i) enter into a particular engagement or partnership with a NSA including, when necessary, through the establishment of specific conditions or measures to mitigate potential risks; ii) continue with an existing engagement or partnership; or iii) disengage from a planned or existing engagement or partnership;
- (iv) Reviewing the periodic report on engagements and partnerships due diligence prepared by PSS, and advising Senior Management on trends and/or issues; and for
- (v) Reviewing engagements and partnerships with NSAs rated Low Risk, for a period of 6 months following the issuance of this Administrative Circular, with a view to recommending streamlined procedures for engagements rated as low risk by PSS.

### III. Membership

- 6. All members of the EPC serve ex-officio and are appointed by the Director-General.
- 7. The Composition of the EPC will be as follows:

<b>Chairperson</b>	Deputy Director-General, Partnerships and Outreach Stream
<b>Vice-Chairperson</b>	Director, Project Support Division (PSS)
<b>Members</b>	Deputy Director-General, Natural Resources and Sustainable Production Stream Deputy Director-General, Corporate Logistics and Operational Support Stream Chief Scientist Chief Economist Directeur de Cabinet Legal Counsel Director, Office of Communications (OCC) Director, Finance Division (CSF)
<b>Secretary</b>	PSS
<b>Observers</b>	Ethics Officer PSR/PSU/PST (as required)

### IV. Decision making

- 8. All eight members of the EPC are expected to participate in each meeting. Each member shall ensure an alternate in case of absence. The alternate should be either a direct deputy or an Officer-in-Charge.
- 9. A quorum will consist of five members.
- 10. The Ethics Officer will attend as observer. Representatives from PSR/PSU/PST may be invited, as observers, depending upon each meeting's Agenda.
- 11. The EPC members will adopt decisions by consensus. However, the EPC may, at any time, refer the matter to the Director-General for final decision.

## **V. Meetings**

12. The EPC will normally meet every two months; additional meetings may be called by the Chairperson, as required. Meetings will be held preferably in person but may be held virtually.
13. The EPC may request the presence of other relevant FAO personnel at the deliberations or the submission of additional information pertinent to the Agenda items.

## **VI. Accountability and Reporting**

14. The EPC is accountable to the Director-General. The minutes of its meetings and other relevant documentation, as appropriate, will be made available to the Director-General on a regular basis.

## **VII. Confidentiality**

15. The Due Diligence and Risk Assessment screening documents and minutes of the EPC meetings are considered confidential information, and must not be shared outside the Organization by FAO personnel.

## **VIII. Entry into force**

16. This Administrative Circular will take immediate effect. DGB 2014/14 is withdrawn and the review process, the Sub-Committee for review of Financial and Other Agreements and the Partnership Committee set up thereunder cease to operate with immediate effect.