



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Vibrant, autonomous, and safe civic spaces enhance democracy. As we look ahead to the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to acknowledge that the role of civil society will be critical to their success. On this International Day of Democracy, I reaffirm UNDP's commitment to supporting free and vibrant civic spaces which enable civil society actors, including always women and youth to contribute effectively to the building of more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies

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UNDP'S CIVIL SOCIETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE Operating Framework

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Background

1. As noted in the 2010 Human Development Report “*The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*”, fully realizing the human development agenda requires not only making progress equitable and broad-based, but also enabling people to become active participants in change. For this reason, UNDP attaches critical importance to the full involvement of civil society actors in all aspects of its work.
2. The UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) is an advisory body of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Established in 2000 to systematize the consultation process between UNDP and civil society actors, the CSAC currently functions as the main institutional mechanism for dialogue between civil society leaders and UNDP senior management.
3. By contributing independent perspectives and critical analyses on different aspects of UNDP’s work, the CSAC has had, over the years, a significant positive impact on the organization. Among other things, this resulted in a strengthening of the civic engagement dimension of UNDP’s policies and programmes, as well as in greater collaboration between UNDP and a broad range of civil society constituencies.
4. Given the changing development landscape and the restructuring of UNDP in 2014, a review of the CSAC’s objectives and operating modalities was undertaken in October 2015 to ensure alignment with the priorities identified in UNDP’s strategic plan (2014-17) and the post 2015 development agenda. This review benefited from insights emerged over time about ways to further strengthen the Committee.

Enhancing the CSAC’s impact: lessons learnt and considerations for the way forward

5. Insights provided by both CSAC members and UNDP staff, including those supporting the CSAC secretariat (past and present), identified the following elements as critical to enhancing the impact of the Committee:
 - a. **Fully leveraging the Committee’s substantive expertise is critical to the CSAC’s success.** The impact of the Committee is maximized when the strong substantive expertise of its members is brought to bear on key strategy and policy development processes.
 - b. **It is important to ensure that adequate space is made for in-depth engagement of CSAC members.** The CSAC’s operating modalities must be conducive to in-depth, rather than cursory or superficial, engagement. This means, for instance, that Annual Meeting agenda should be focused on a limited number of high-impact issues.
 - c. **The quality of follow-up shapes the quality of the interaction between UNDP and the Committee.** Strong mechanisms to track organizational follow-up on CSAC recommendations are critical to ensuring that the interactions between UNDP and the Committee remain meaningful.
 - d. **There is a need to strengthen the Committee’s engagement at the regional and national levels.** The Committee’s reach can be enhanced by expanding opportunities for interaction with regionally-focused parts of UNDP (i.e. Regional Bureaux and Regional Hubs).
 - e. **Sustaining engagement beyond Annual Meetings.** There are several ways in which engagement with the Committee can be meaningfully sustained between Annual Meeting sessions. These include involvement of CSAC in policy development beyond the Annual Meeting, but also collaboration in advocacy and partnership development
 - f. **Combining collective and individual engagement.** Greater effectiveness can be achieved by appropriately combining the engagement of the entire Committee on cross-cutting and strategic matters with the engagement of selected members with specific thematic expertise or experience on more thematically-focused matters.

UNDP's focus areas and key functions under the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan

6. The vision articulated in UNDP's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan is: "to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion". This vision is pursued through work in three focus areas: sustainable development pathways; inclusive and effective democratic governance; and resilience.

Table 1. UNDP's focus areas

FOCUS AREA	KEY OBJECTIVES (AS PER THE 2014-2017 WORKPLAN)
Sustainable development pathways	"We will assist programme countries to design and implement development pathways that can tackle the connected issues of poverty, inequality and exclusion while transforming productive capacities, avoiding the irreversible depletion of social and natural capital and lowering risks arising from shocks. Our aim will be to help improve the resource endowments of the poor and boost their prospects for employment and livelihoods."
Inclusive and effective democratic governance	"We will assist countries to maintain or secure peaceful and democratic governance, either when faced with large-scale changes or confronting specific challenges such as reforming constitutions, organizing credible elections or strengthening parliaments. We will also help governance institutions adapt to changing public expectations and deliver clear benefits to citizens, whether in terms of better services, improved access to resources needed for employment and livelihoods or greater security of persons and property."
Resilience	"All areas of work proposed in this Strategic Plan will help build resilience [...] [Beyond that] we will focus on two additional issues that are absolutely crucial going forward: rapid and effective recovery from conflict-induced crises in those cases where prevention has fallen short; and a much stronger ability to prepare for and deal with the consequences of natural disasters, especially as they are exacerbated by climate change"

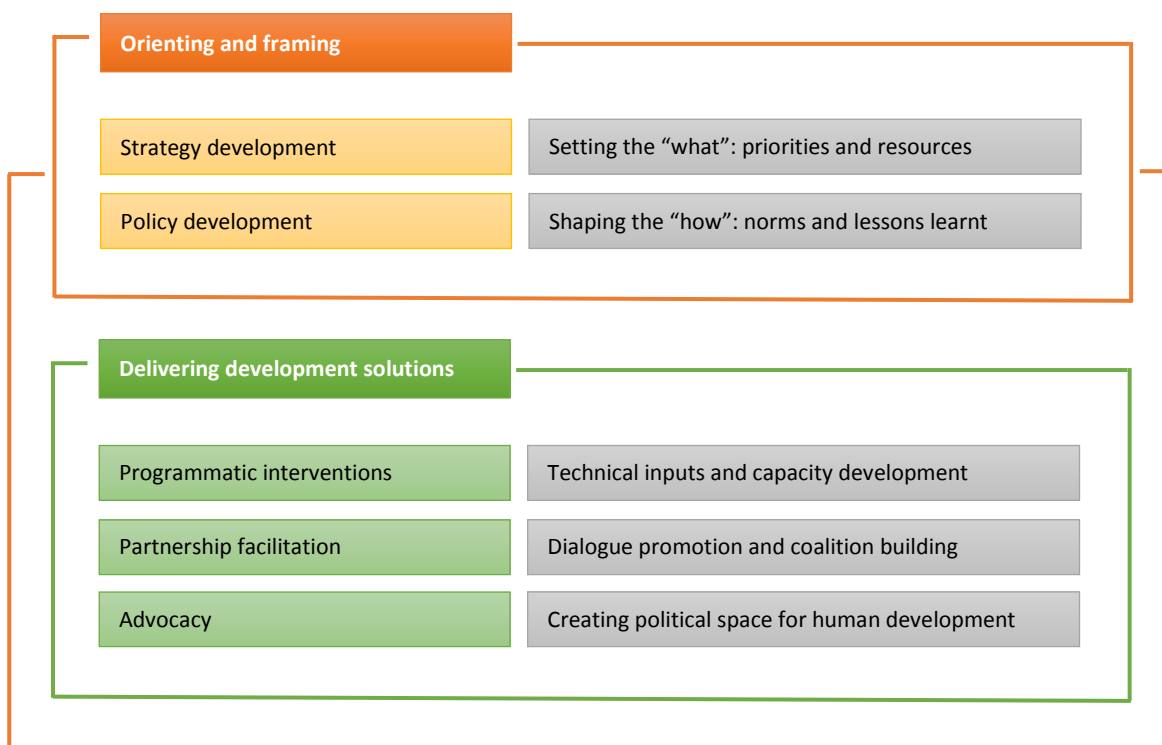
7. UNDP' Strategic Plan strongly emphasizes that UNDP will strive to ensure "participation and voice [...] [in the pursuit of all its various objectives], working [among other things] with the poor and other excluded groups as agents of their own development". In addition, civic engagement is explicitly addressed as a specific area of work in the Strategic Plan Integrated Results to Resources Framework (IRRF), which regards "frameworks and dialogue processes for effective and transparent engagement of civil society in national development" (Output 2.4) as a way to ensure that "citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance" (Outcome 2).

Box 1. Civic engagement in UNDP

UNDP defines civic engagement as the broad range of actions undertaken by individual and collective actors operating in the civil society arena. Civic engagement can take a multiplicity of forms, including – among others: actions aimed at influencing the outcome of policy-making processes; actions aimed at holding state institutions accountable for the fulfilment of their responsibilities; actions aimed at shaping cultural norms and practices; actions aimed at complementing (or supplementing) the state's delivery of goods and services. UNDP seeks to foster civic engagement by undertaking work in a number of priority areas. These include the promotion of an enabling environment for civil society and capacity strengthening for a broad range of civil society actors. In 2014, a total of 248 project outputs in 91 countries were linked to the SP Output 2.4 ("Frameworks and dialogue processes established for effective and transparent engagement of civil society in national development"). The total budget attached to these outputs was 77,761,845 USD (actual expenditures). This represents however just a fraction of the work actually carried out by UNDP in this field, as a significant portion of efforts to promote civic engagement take place within the context of other thematic areas.

8. UNDP is a highly complex organization which seeks to promote structural transformation for sustainable human development through action on multiple levels. It is essential that this complexity be taken into account when reflecting on the most appropriate role and functions of the CSAC.
9. At the core of UNDP’s work, there are programmatic interventions aimed at delivering development solutions through technical assistance and capacity strengthening. These activities are complemented by dialogue promotion and coalition building – vital components of UNDP’s partnership-facilitation function. Advocacy efforts geared towards expanding political space for human development are also a fundamental aspect of what the organization does.
10. The various activities carried out by UNDP are framed and guided by corporate-level policy-setting – the process through which UNDP ensures that its work is, at same time, in line with internationally-agreed normative standards and consistent with lessons learnt in international practice. Corporate-level strategy-setting provides orientation to different parts of the organization by identifying corporate priorities as well as the most appropriate ways to line up resources behind organizational objectives.

Figure 1. Selected UNDP functions with potential relevance to the CSAC’s mandate



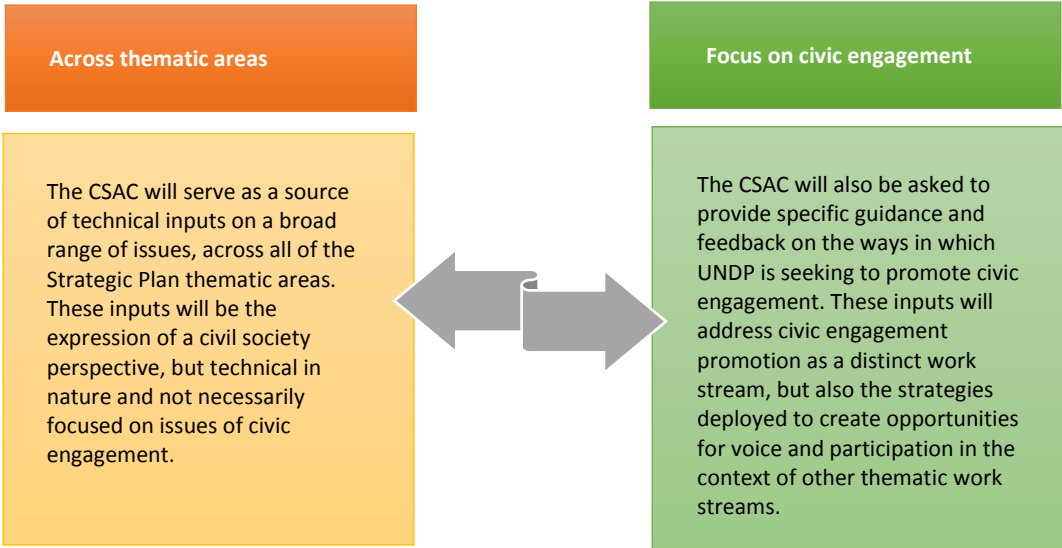
11. The next section articulates the objectives and operating modalities of the CSAC in relation to the substantive focus areas and key functions illustrated above.

Objectives and operating modalities

Objectives

- 12. While it is through its programmes that UNDP can ultimately make a difference on the ground, it would not be practically possible, appropriate or effective to involve CSAC members in all or even a majority of UNDP’s individual programmatic interventions. However, the CSAC can play a critical role in shaping relevant programmatic aspects of UNDP’s work through its engagement in the definition and articulation of key strategies and policy positions.
- 13. Civil society perspectives matter for all aspects of UNDP’s work. Hence, the CSAC advisory functions should not be confined to issues of civic engagement and civic space, or indeed to any specific thematic area, but rather cover issues across all the dimensions of UNDP’s Strategic Plan: sustainable development pathways, inclusive and effective democratic governance and resilience.
- 14. At the same time, interactions with the Committee represent an exceptional opportunity to obtain the views of a broad range of civil society constituencies on UNDP’s efforts to promote voice and participation as goals in their own right. A very explicit and proactive effort should be made, therefore, to maximize the Committee’s potential as a source of guidance with respect to UNDP’s work on civic engagement.

Figure 1. Different substantive inputs to be provided by the CSAC



15. Through its varied membership, the CSAC can provide strategic entry points into important civil society constituencies and assist UNDP in its efforts to reach out to key civil society actors at global, regional and country level. For this reason, partnership development should be regarded as a distinct and essential component of the interaction between UNDP and the CSAC.
16. Notwithstanding the diversity of roles and organizational mandates, UNDP and the members of the CSAC undoubtedly share a common commitment to sustainable human development and the realization of human rights. There is a definite potential, therefore, for UNDP and the CSAC to join hands in advocacy efforts on matters of shared concern, without prejudice to their respective independence. This collaboration may materialize, for instance, through the participation of individual Committee members as speakers in UNDP events, but also through the organization of joint events with individual or multiple members and the development of common messages on key emerging issues.
17. Based on the above considerations, the specific objectives of UNDP’s Civil Society Advisory Committee are defined as follows.

Table 2. CSAC’s specific objectives

KEY FOCUS	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE
Strategy and policy	Provide substantive inputs into the development of key UNDP strategies and policies across UNDP’s three substantive areas of focus: sustainable development pathways, inclusive and effective democratic governance and resilience
Civic engagement	Advise UNDP on different aspects of its work to promote civic engagement at global, regional and country level, including on the most appropriate strategies to expand and protect civic space as well as ways to strengthen the capacity of key civil society actors
Partnership	Support UNDP outreach and partnership development efforts by facilitating the creation of appropriate communication channels with key civil society constituencies represented on the Committee at global, regional and country level
Advocacy	Join hands with UNDP in advocacy efforts on matter of shared concern, including through the organization of joint events, the development of common messages, and the participation of individual Committee members as speakers in UNDP event, or of UNDP staff as speakers in civil society events

18. In addition to the above, the possibility remains to seek the engagement of individual Committee members – based on their technical expertise – in programme development and implementation, particularly for programmes that are considered especially critical in view of their size and strategic relevance.

Operating modalities

19. The CSAC objectives will be pursued through a number of work processes, including those listed in Tables 3-5. These work processes specifically seek to operationalize some of the principles highlighted in paragraph 4, including the need to promote a substantive, in-depth and focused engagement, the importance of making space for regionally focused dialogue, and the need to sustain Committee engagement between Annual Meetings, while effectively combining “all-of-membership” and “individual members” involvement.

Table 3. Work processes related to the CSAC focus area 1: “Strategy and policy”

STRATEGY AND POLICY
<p>In order to ensure that face-to-face interactions between UNDP staff and Committee members during Annual Meetings are as substantive as possible, UNDP will identify a limited number of key strategy and policy matters – ideally not more than one or two – for in-depth discussion at the Meeting. Typically, these discussions will focus on new strategies and policies in the process of being developed, but they may also address emerging issues where policy development is still nascent as well as existing strategies and policies which need to be updated, including as a result of external evaluations. In addition, CSAC inputs will be sought remotely during the course of the year, as part of the regular UNDP quality assurance process for the development of key strategy and policy documents.</p> <p>While it is essential for CSAC inputs to be linked – in an institutionalized and systematic way – to UNDP’s ongoing strategy and policy development processes, it is also important for the Committee to bring in fresh perspectives and help UNDP think about development challenges in innovative ways. For this reason, there will also be opportunities for the CSAC to identify a discussion topic for the Annual Meeting, including topics focused on emerging and “over-the-horizon” issues, which, in the view of the Committee, UNDP should engage with. Through this process, the traditional “sounding board” function of the Committee will be complemented by a new role, with greater focus on “out-of-the box”, forward-looking thinking.</p>
WORK PROCESSES
During Annual Meetings
In-depth discussion on strategy and policy matters identified by UNDP
In-depth discussion on strategy and policy matters identified by the CSAC
Between Annual Meetings
CSAC engagement as part of key strategy and policy quality assurance processes

Table 4. Work processes related to the CSAC focus area 2: “Civic engagement”

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
<p>Overall guidance and specific technical inputs will be sought from the Committee, during the course of the year, in support of the civic engagement work carried out by the Inclusive Political Processes Team and other parts of UNDP. A process may also be considered through which the CSAC is engaged as an early warning mechanism with the aim of drawing UNDP senior management’s attention to emerging, country-specific threats to civic space. Given the complexity and potential sensitivities involved in implementing such a mechanism, a more detailed document defining the scope and modalities of this kind of engagement will be prepared in consultation with the Committee.</p> <p>Recognizing that effective civic engagement promotion strategies are context-dependent and in view of the need to foster a close collaboration between the CSAC and UNDP’s senior management at headquarters – including in Regional Bureaux and Country Offices – an appropriate amount of time will be regularly set aside for region-specific discussions on the work carried out by UNDP to promote civic engagement. These discussions will serve as an opportunity for the CSAC to provide advice and guidance to Regional Bureaux as well as a way to strengthen partnerships between UNDP and relevant civil society constituencies at regional level.</p>
WORK PROCESSES
During Annual Meetings
Globally-focused in-depth discussion on civic engagement
Regionally-focused in-depth discussion on civic engagement
Between Annual Meetings
On-going interaction with relevant parts of UNDP on civic engagement programming
Engagement as an early-warning mechanism on threats to civic space*

* To be precised in a separate document

Figure 3. Dual function of the CSAC in relation to strategy and policy

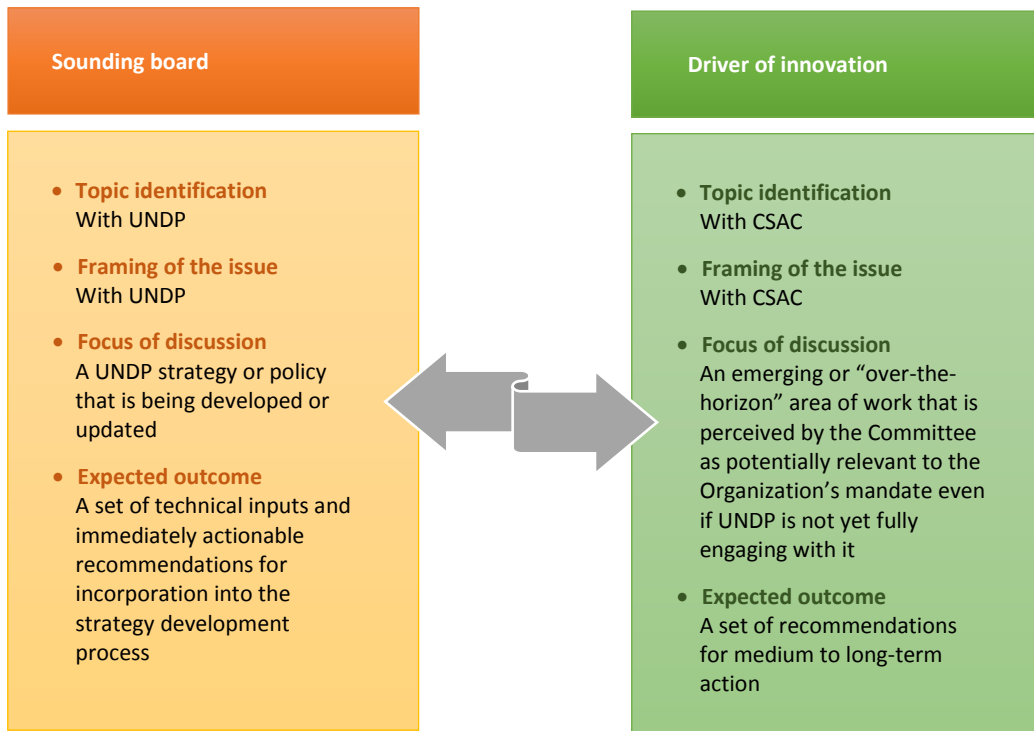


Figure 4. Process and expected outcomes of regionally focused in-depth conversations on civic engagement

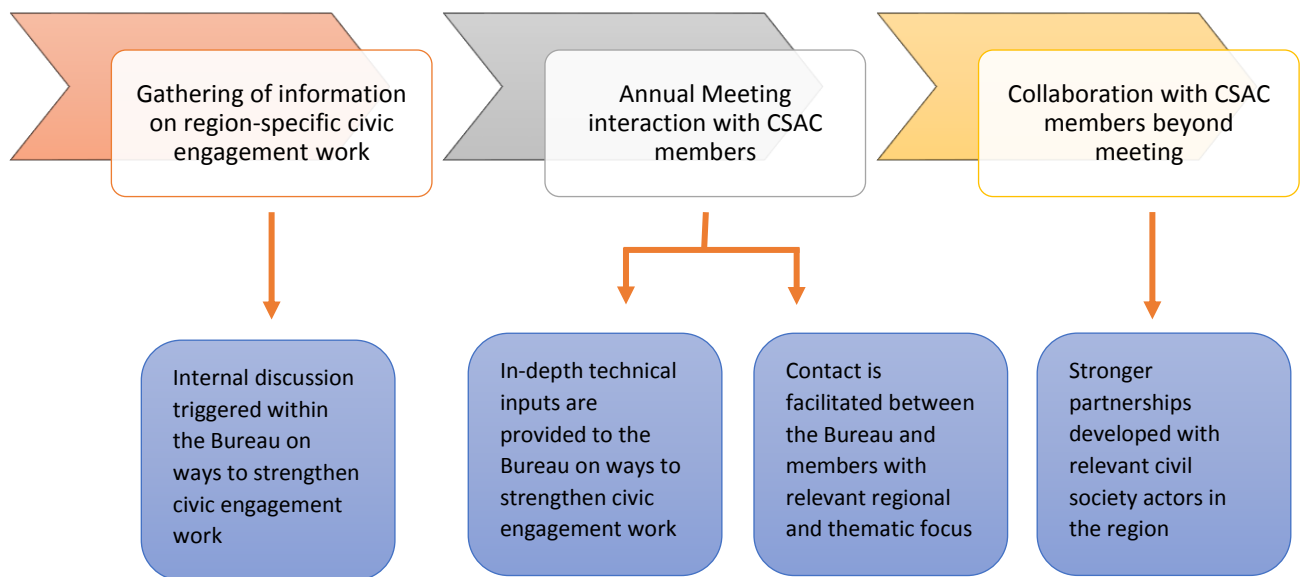
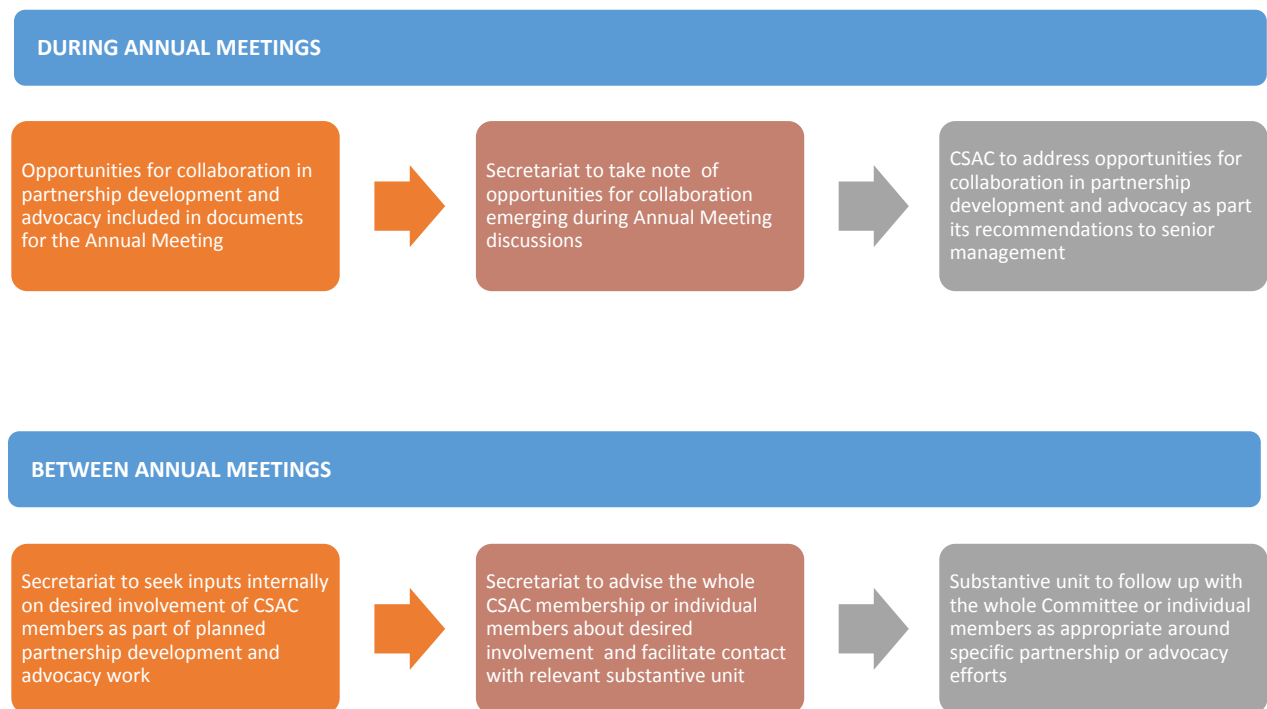


Table 5. Work processes related to the CSAC focus area 3 and 4: “Partnership” and “Advocacy”

PARTNERSHIP AND ADVOCACY
Opportunities for collaboration in the context of partnership development and advocacy efforts will naturally emerge during the Annual Meeting discussions and should be explicitly included in the meeting’s final report and recommendations. In addition, a proactive effort will be made by the CSAC Secretariat to obtain inputs from senior management and relevant substantive units on the desired involvement of CSAC members as part of planned partnership development and advocacy activities during the course of the year.
WORK PROCESSES
During Annual Meetings
Identification of opportunities for collaboration in partnership development and advocacy
Between Annual Meetings
Collaboration with relevant substantive units

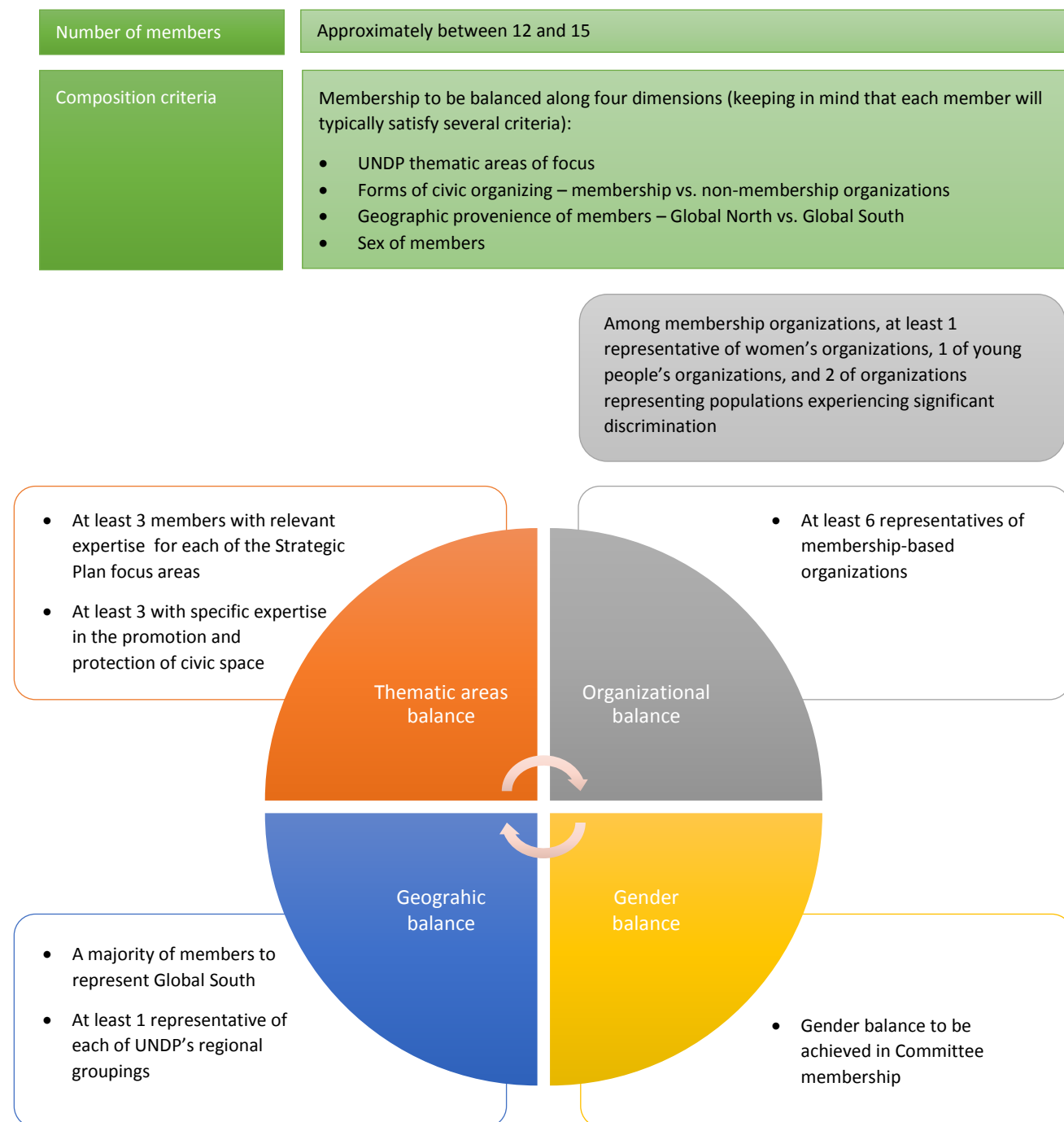
Figure 4. Possible steps to ensure CSAC members engagement in partnership and advocacy work



Membership

19. CSAC members are appointed by UNDP senior management in keeping with the criteria laid out in the CSAC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). It is vital – in order for the Committee to effectively perform its functions – that its membership composition be at the same time reflective of the diversity of civil society and relevant to UNDP’s mandate and thematic areas of focus. Given this basic premise, the following membership composition framework will be used as a guide for the Committee’s membership renewal process.

Figure 5. CSAC membership composition framework



20. Committee members will serve in an individual capacity and not as representatives of specific organizations. References to organizational affiliation contained in the Committee's membership composition framework are simply meant to ensure that members' backgrounds are representative of multiple forms of civic organizing. They should not be seen as implying any kind of formal relationship between the Committee and its members' organizations. The CSAC MoU will include detailed stipulations regarding possible conflicts of interest related to participation in the Committee.

Secretariat

21. Further to UNDP's Structural Change exercise in 2014, a civic engagement portfolio was established under the Inclusive Political Processes (IPP) Team in the Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) reflecting UNDP's intention to fully integrate civic engagement into its policy development and programme support work. As a cross-cutting issue, however, the promotion of civic engagement remains a shared responsibility across UNDP and significant work is being carried out in this area by different parts of the organization at all level of operations.
22. Given its role in leading policy and programmes support work on civic engagement, the Inclusive Political Processes Team of BPPS will host the Secretariat of the CSAC. The Secretariat will, in turn, support the overall Committee's functioning by performing the following tasks:
 - Facilitate communication flow between UNDP's senior management and the Committee's Co-Chairs;
 - Facilitate the agenda-setting process for Annual Meetings;
 - Facilitate communication flow in relation to preparations for the Annual Meeting , including communication with relevant substantive units on the preparation of background documents;
 - Support drafting of the Annual Meeting final report and monitoring of recommendations follow up;
 - Facilitate communication between relevant substantive units and the Committee between Annual Meetings;
 - Facilitate the process of membership renewal.