

## PEOPLE TOWARD HABITAT II

### Nongovernmental and Community-based Organizations Position Paper

# ***Constructing a New Social Alternative***

Third draft  
February 1996

(process)

1. The participation of social organizations in the Habitat II preparatory process is increasing in diverse countries and regions. This participation is strengthened by linking these efforts and initiatives at the international level.
1. Habitat International Coalition (HIC), in coordination with other international networks, started a broad consultation process to formulate a series of principles for a vision of human settlements and housing from the perspective of the experience, practice and struggle of community-based organizations and the nongovernmental support organizations aligned with them.
2. These principles and the critical situation faced by a large and growing number of poor people established positions and the definition of joint action strategies in preparation for and beyond Habitat II. An initial text was created for the International Workshop "People Toward Habitat II" held in La Havana, Cuba, in early March 1995, based on documents prepared by social organizations (NGOs, popular urban organizations, networks, coalitions), documents on specific themes produced at different occasions by HIC, and proposals that have emerged from the NGO and social organization processes toward Habitat II.
3. Earlier documents of particular note are: the [Limuru Declaration](#) (1987); the [HIC Global Policy Declaration](#) (1989); the "[Treaty for Just, Democratic and Sustainable Cities, Towns and Villages](#)" (signed by FCOC, the Brazilian Forum for Urban Reform and HIC in 1992); [Philosophy, Objectives and Policies for a New Organizational Structure for HIC](#) (1994); documents from the Democracy and Territory Group (Mexico, 1994) and the International Forum on Urban Reform (Rio de Janeiro, 1992).}
4. The first draft was the basis for in-depth debates at La Havana. Observations, clarifications and additions were collected and integrated within a second draft, that was presented at the second meeting of the Habitat II Preparatory Committee and the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements in Nairobi, Kenya from 24 April to 5 May 1995.
5. A third draft was prepared in February of 1996 after additional contributions. The third draft contained similar content to earlier drafts, but was substantially re-organized to more clearly identify principles and a framework for action.

6. The principles in this document come from a different perspective than the official documents created for Habitat II, and are intended to enrich the commitments that will be ratified by governments at Habitat II in June 1996. Our principles are meant to be benchmarks against that to judge the commitments and declarations of Habitat II.
7. This document is meant to contribute to the formation of a long-term action strategy. This strategy should allow NGOs and social organizations to advance together in the struggle to build a better quality of life and more just, democratic and sustainable living conditions for all.
8. The document is structured around four key sections:
  - an introduction, that contains an explanation of process, along with a simple declaration and commitment to action by NGOs and CBOs on housing and human settlements issues.
  - a snapshot of the current global reality, beginning with the desperate housing conditions facing the almost one in every four humans and concluding with a review of positive developments in recent years.
  - a statement of five key principles on housing and human settlements.
  - a framework for action, that includes a commitment toward constructing a new social alternative, and also identifies particular actions in a number of areas.
9. This document is meant to breathe. CBOs and NGOs are encouraged to continue to contribute their experiences and analyses and also to take this document home with them, carefully analyze their local/national/regional situation and develop strategies for action in co-operation with local, national and global partners.
10. The principles have been drafted from the perspective of the people themselves who work and struggle to improve their living conditions and to obtain the necessary support to do so. More than responding to absolute and abstract concepts they respond to concrete rights.

*(commitment to action)*

11. As community-based and nongovernment organizations working toward ensuring that all humans have good shelter in a safe and decent home and to live in peace with dignity, we declare our commitment to constructing a new social alternative for housing and human settlements.
12. We will work toward such an alternative with faith that it can be achieved because we are in direct contact with the negative impact of the dominant system on the daily lives of people everywhere. At the same time, we witness the small and large efforts and experiences of rural communities, urban groups and social movements, assisted or not by nongovernmental organizations aligned with them that move the world toward this new alternative.

13. Even though such an alternative has not yet been fully developed, the idea inspires our imagination and creativity, orients our action and strengthens our joint efforts. Such an alternative implies a new economic structure and a new cultural paradigm.
14. The construction of a social alternative must take into account the limited nature of the earth's resources and of nature's regenerative capacity. At the same time, it must open the way for a more just distribution of the goods and services produced by society. It would seek to modify the consumption patterns of wealthy countries and of the wealthy within each country toward more austere lifestyles, while significantly improving the living conditions of the poor.
15. We commit ourselves to returning to our local communities and to continuing to take action at the global, regional, national and local levels.

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## ***A. The global reality***

- I.** Close to 1.2 billion people, almost one-quarter of the world's population, live in desperate housing conditions that are unsafe, unhealthy and precarious, including more than 100 million who are homeless. While the majority of the inadequately housed live in poor countries, their numbers are growing in wealthy countries.
- II.** Also growing are the numbers of those displaced, evicted, or forced by political, ethnic, technocratic, religious, and economic reasons to leave their environments, their homes, their communities and even their countries of origin. Many people are suffering the violent destruction of their homes and neighbourhoods. Many are pressed by economic limitations and market forces to leave their homes and adapt to precarious housing or homelessness.
- III.** Women, children, the elderly and other groups are especially vulnerable because of their health, race or religious creed.
- IV.** In addition, increasingly large numbers of people live in housing that is over-crowded or in environments that lack basic infrastructure and physical or social services.
- V.** Common factors affecting housing include speculation, privatization, increased market orientation, selective modernization, the lack (in social, institutional and cultural terms) of a city project, the informality of spontaneous settlements, the monotony of large urban projects implanting enclaves upon the fabric of traditional urban life, and the destruction of the historic and natural patrimony.
- VI.** These combine not only to destroy the urban image and to alienate the patrimony, but to promote loss of identity, anarchic urban growth with high infrastructure and service costs, irrational use of the soil through occupation of agricultural areas or areas with comparative advantages for other uses, social segregation and the destruction of public and green areas. All these factors affect quality of life and the environment for all inhabitants, and, in particular, the poor.

*(economic / market realities)*

- VII.** Most governments promote systems based on economic growth, industrialization and globalization. These processes create unresolved complexities and contradictions and have given way to forms of territorial organization characterized by increased inequalities, concentration of activities and populations in large cities, increased exclusion and extreme poverty of large portions of the population, inequalities in the distribution of social goods and services, and the accumulation of a housing backlog.
- VIII.** The current system of capitalist economic development is oriented toward the unregulated (although selective) operation of market forces, especially against weaker

partners. It promotes the "globalization of the economy," based on profit, limitless growth, and aggressive competition. It demands an ever-increasing and unlimited use of the planet's resources.

- IX.** The rapid expansion of this system is resulting in large scale accumulations and control of wealth, widening the gap between the rich and the poor in the North and the South as well as the gap between the South and the North. When the capricious control by a few of such large portions of wealth leads to instability, the State steps in to protect and guarantee large capital interests, with the socialization of losses or structural adjustments. The result is that poverty is increasing, and a new category, "the excluded," has emerged.

*(globalization)*

- X.** Ultimately, the globalization of the economy seeks to open the way for large transnational corporations to penetrate into all corners of the planet. They continue to function according to their assumption of unlimited growth, as they ferociously compete to gain access to new markets.

- XI.** One early problem faced by most countries of the South was aggressive promotion of loans leading to extreme indebtedness. When these countries faced difficulties in making repayments, a new order was established through the policies of structural adjustment. Privatization, salary and subsidy cut-backs, deregulation, the reduction of the public sector and its relinquishing of its former responsibility for implementing social policies all had an immediate impact. National, local and individual self-determination were limited or sacrificed.

- XII.** Land, services and housing became more costly, and legal and other forms of support for individually or collectively self-managed housing were eliminated.

- XIII.** Attempts have been made to alleviate the terrible impact of these policies through "poverty alleviation" programs, that consist mainly of band-aid efforts in that rights are replaced by philanthropy and populism is disguised as participation.

- XIV.** The people lost the last form of wealth that they held and that had allowed them to survive and make a place to live: their ability to meet their personal needs for housing, clothing and survival based on their creativity, their familiarity with resources in their environment, as well as the technical abilities that they inherited from their culture, that allowed them to make rational use of them.

- XV.** The network of major cities serves as nodes of the global economy, where regional control of major corporations and capital interests is concentrated. This control is exercised through the media and includes control over new technologies and their dissemination. Rural areas are forgotten except as sources of raw materials and other inputs to the economy and as the dumping ground for the wastes.

- XVI.** The electronic transmission of information allows for rapid communication with other centres, making it possible to send and receive information and decisions that are made ever more distant from concrete realities. These information flows take precedence over

concrete places and the peoples and cultures linked to them.

*(withdrawal by state)*

**XVII.** Globalization and industrialization has led to the gradual cancellation of social policy mechanisms and tools in favour of privatization. Some countries have abolished basic political, economic, social and cultural human rights, further restricting the full exercise of citizenship and democratic participation in habitat management.

**XVIII.** The State is abandoning responsibilities and transferring them to the private sector. Some governments have transformed their housing agencies into mere providers of credit or direct subsidies for acquiring housing through the real estate market. Financial instruments and procedures have been adapted to facilitate this process.

**XIX.** The transfer of responsibilities does not support housing production by social organizations and poor people. Better opportunities for private, for-profit housing development has led to the gradual elimination of the financial instruments and mechanisms that formerly supported the nonprofit, social sector in the promotion and production of habitat.

**XX.** Possibilities for development have been greatly reduced for the third sector, that has significantly contributed to housing construction in poor countries.

*(growing poverty)*

**XXI.** Housing is treated as merchandise to be regulated by market forces. The deregulation of housing has allowed resources to move into construction of high-cost housing for middle and upper classes. This impacts negatively in urban development and leads to the concentration of resources in the most developed urban areas to the detriment of other regions.

**XXII.** The dominant economic system has increased poverty and led to the deterioration of living conditions for people and the city. The poorest people have limited access to housing and urban services. The popular sectors must adapt to ever more precarious solutions or else resolve their need for and right to housing on their own, without significant support.

**XXIII.** The independent efforts of the popular sector to resolve their housing needs have become increasingly difficult, limiting the autonomous management and the mobilization of the resources of the communities themselves.

*(urban planning)*

**XXIV.** In recent years, urban planning has been virtually eliminated and replaced with short-term negotiations with major investors and deregulation to open up territorial control to the unregulated operation of market forces. These processes are accentuating urban segregation, social exclusion and housing and service deficiencies for more and more people.

**XXV.**Additional consequences of the lack of adequate planning, of the disintegration of the habitable space, and of chaotic urban growth, are increased insecurity and greater vulnerability to natural, environmental and social risks.

**XXVI.**Policies that promote the use of automobiles, chaotic transportation and large public engineering projects to "resolve" problems, contribute to the fragmentation of urban space and to environmental degradation.

*(housing design)*

**XXVII.**In many countries, housing design does not take into account the climate, local habits and traditions, and domestic pollution sources, will not allow for an adequate air quality and leads to physical and psychological ailments for inhabitants.

**XXVIII.**The lack of systematic maintenance in buildings and the surrounding environments worsens environmental pollution, increasing health risks.

**XXIX.**Women and children are most affected since they spend more time at home and in their community. Equally affected are the elderly, the disabled and the sick, all of whom are generally not taken into account in the design of housing, settlements, urban facilities, infrastructure and public areas.

*(environment)*

**XXX.**The dominant system of economic development is based on the assumption of unlimited growth, that stands in contrast to the limited nature of the planet and its resources. Environmental degradation extracts resources wherever they are found according to a concept of globalization that justifies a disrespect for all means by that people control their land and environment.

**XXXI.**The massive and globalized, as opposed to locally governed, use of resources is accelerating the waste of raw materials, unnecessary industrial production, and irrational consumption. It is ecologically unsustainable.

**XXXII.**The relationship between poverty and environmental deterioration is not one of cause and effect. Both are a consequence of the same cause: the unjust and environmentally destructive system that dominates the world economy.

**XXXIII.**In the rural environment, physical deterioration and the loss of sustainability of the productive space contributes to the fragmentation of the productive units, environmental pollution, the occupation of agricultural areas for settlements, the lack of services, and the introduction of urban models that clash with the traditional use of space, the cultural identities and the local resource and technology characteristics.

**XXXIV.**The expulsion of the native populations from their habitat through economic pressures, "development" projects and other causes, affects their forms of subsistence and breaks the equilibrium between culture and environment, putting at risk the extinction of flora, fauna and the human groups themselves.

*(conclusion)*

**XXXV.**All of these circumstances contribute to the serious and increasing deterioration of the housing conditions of a large and growing sector of humanity. That in turn contributes to family disintegration, affecting especially the children, with which, in the immediate future, the social health and community life of the affected populations will be put at grave risk.

*(positive developments)*

**XXXVI.**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right to housing and forms part of many agreements, conventions and international treaties, including the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (subscribed to by more than 120 countries).

**XXXVII.**Important advances have been achieved in the 1990s in the practical application of this Convention by defining the scope and content of the right to housing. Important resolutions have been adopted for the defense and implementation of the right to housing, generating jurisprudence and applying diverse mechanisms to monitor the activity of the governments.

**XXXVIII.**These advances have been achieved through close collaboration among the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Habitat International Coalition and other nongovernmental organizations, and the action carried out by the social organizations within their countries.

**XXXIX.**Beginning from its 14<sup>th</sup> Session, the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements has assumed a positive role in the recognition of this right and has instructed the Habitat Centre to propose an action strategy to assume a more relevant role in the promotion, defense and implementation of this right.

*(CBOs and NGOs)*

**XL.**Significant development of community and nongovernmental organizations, including the consolidation of coalitions and experience and information exchange networks, has taken place in recent years.

**XLI.**At the same time, many successful experiences and practices in habitat management have been developed, including many in partnership with local governments.

**XLII.**These processes contribute to the building of identities and the integration within the broader society of the participating community organizations.

**XLIII.**Social movements demanding land and public finance for habitat development are important parts of the struggle for the improvement of living conditions. The self-management sense of the communities and movements is significant not only during the process of housing construction and introduction of services but also in the process of strengthening of conditions for a genuine democratic management.



**XLIV.**Over the past thirty years, a vast number of groups and movements have emerged from civil society to work with a concept of development that focuses on access to adequate living conditions: access to a place in that to live in peace and dignity, to basic services, and to a healthy environment, as well as space for political participation, and respect for human rights.

**XLV.**These new groups have joined traditional peoples that have nurtured a concept of sustainable development over centuries. These groups, movements and peoples have contributed to an accumulation of communal and popular practices, both traditional and emerging, that profile a distinct project - a project rooted in place, in culture, and in real women and men.

**XLVI.**All of us are not yet immersed in a globalized world. There still exists a communal environment that links social groups and nature through a rich and plural expression of cultures inextricably linked to specific places and natural resources.

**XLVII.**Experiences that hold the seeds of the new concept of development, and that also include democratic, participatory and territorially rooted management of the city, can be found in urban centres.

**XLVIII.**Despite some limits, setbacks and conflicts, these real-world experiences point toward a different future from that offered by the globalized, industrialized and radically divided dominant ideology. This new future rescues the relationship of the human beings with nature. It links the scientific and technological advances to the benefit of all the inhabitants of the planet.

**XLIX.**This vision necessarily puts limits on infinite economic growth, but opens new paths in a more-just distribution of the goods and services produced by society. It guarantees sufficient means for a dignified life for all, liberty, democracy and wide possibilities for the enjoyment of life.

**L.** An enormous cultural wealth and rich experience exists in social housing production, at the individual, family and organized community levels. This is particularly true in the less industrialized countries and in the majority low-income social sectors, directly contributing to the improvement of their quality of life.

**LI.** The work developed jointly by social base groups and the nongovernmental organizations that support them has allowed the systematization and development of these social forms of housing production and has opened the way to an enormous creative power and a great capacity of transformation and innovation in the development of solutions to the groups' particular problems.

**LII.** Some governments have recognized this type of social initiative and created specific support instruments that allow the communities to participate in the management, production, distribution, maintenance and control of their settlement and housing processes.

**LIII.**Such social experiences and practices constitute an important reference to confront the trends toward the increasing deterioration of the quality of life in human settlements and

housing.

**LIV.** Despite the increasing restrictions they face, the social sector has achieved the accumulation of a vast experience in the mobilization of multiple resources for the production of its housing spaces.

**LV.** Important experiences exist in diverse countries in the handling of savings and loan funds by the grassroots organizations themselves. In some cases national level credit funds and even community banks have been integrated.

**LVI.** Housing projects directed by the social organizations have been developed that include the development of production activities that complement the family incomes and directly support the projects.

**LVII.** Some governments have developed financial tools and mechanisms oriented to the support of the social production of housing. This important experience accumulated in the social base organizations, NGOs and some public institutions demonstrates the viability of focusing on the strengthening of alternatives to the current elitist financial systems.

## ***B. Five key principles:***

- I. **The struggle for full implementation of universally recognized human rights is the starting point in achieving the objectives of habitat II: adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.**
  1. Humans, as all species, have the right to a habitat. The inalienable right to a place to live is closely linked to the right to life, in its spiritual and material aspects.
  2. All children, women and men have the right to a safe and decent home and to live in peace with dignity. Shelter, like food and clothing, is a basic human need. If any of these are lacking, or if conditions for satisfying them are precarious, human beings cannot live in peace with dignity. Physical and psychological health, and life itself, depends on individuals and families being able to use and enjoy an adequate place to live.
  3. The right to housing is not limited to a physical structure. It includes housing-shelter and habitat-environment as a whole, in all its cultural, historic, social, economic, political, legal, environmental, physical and territorial dimensions.
  4. All children, women and men have the right to the city, meaning the land, the means for survival, a healthy and safe environment, housing, water, sanitation, health, education, public transportation, food, work, recreation and information.
  5. The right to the city also includes respect for minorities and ethnic, sexual and cultural plurality; the respect for indigenous groups and immigrants and the recognition of their full citizenship; the preservation of historical and cultural heritage; and the enjoyment of a place that is culturally diverse, without discrimination based on gender, nationality, race, language or beliefs.
- II. **Democratic governance is essential for equity and sustainability to be achieved.**
  1. The participation of all men and women in the planning and management of the place and territory in that they live is essential in order to guarantee that the use of the resources and any projects and investments benefit them directly, within criteria of equitable distribution, economic complementarity, respect for the culture, and ecological sustainability. A special effort is required to ensure that priorities are defined through social processes.
- III. **Development based on social justice is needed to reverse the poverty and environmental deterioration that come from the current economic model.**
  1. The efforts of all people as members of the global community and as inhabitants of

a particular place on Earth are needed to plan and develop a new social system, based on liberty, justice, democracy and ecological sustainability, whose objective is the well-being of all in harmony with nature, now and for future generations.

**IV. Improved quality of life is achieved through people's shelter and settlement processes.**

1. Improved quality of life is linked to the principles of equity and justice for all. People strive to improve the quality of life in their settlements and homes in order to protect and improve their health and security, and to be able to enjoy, in accordance with their particular culture and conditions, the possibility of intimacy, personal and collective expression, rest, and spaces for their economic, political, religious, social and recreational activities, within a healthy environment.
2. Everyone, and in particular the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled, should be able to participate in the planning, design, execution, management, maintenance, rehabilitation and improvement of their habitat, in order to achieve adequate spaces and infrastructure for their various tasks and functions, and in accordance with their particular living conditions and aspirations.

**V. Enabling processes should provide resources for those that need them and support peoples' housing and settlement processes.**

1. When people have access to financial and other necessary resources, they are able to individually or collectively satisfy their need to a place to live in peace with dignity. Governments have a responsibility to assist those groups that suffer from housing deficiencies and lack of services.
2. This includes supporting their efforts to organize and be legally recognized, to mobilize material resources, solidarity and mutual support, to use their technical abilities, their creativity and their labour, to directly control the financial resources generated by their savings and economic activities to have access to the technical assistance providers of their choice, to generate complementary forms of support and to control their own processes of housing construction and improvement.

## **C. Constructing a new social alternative:**

- I. In light of current global realities and our commitment to key principles, and based on discussions involving more than 100 social organizations, signatories to the [Treaty for Just, Democratic and Sustainable Cities and Villages](#) developed at the 1992 Earth Summit, and considering the unfulfilled written commitments made by the governments who signed the Agenda 21 agreement at that same event, we commit ourselves to construct a new social alternative.
- II. The alternative must promote new forms of public control based on inside-out, bottom-up processes. It would propose:
  - democratic participation instead of authoritarianism.
  - decentralized participation instead of bureaucratic control.
  - effective means of handling complex issues instead of the artificial simplification of reality.
  - the multiplication of opportunities and support for social initiatives instead of attention to needs in the abstract.
  - responsibility and empowerment instead of impotence and paternalism.
- III. The alternative system would seek to conserve the natural and social wealth of the planet by promoting:
  - respect for biological diversity instead of limitless environmental destruction.
  - respect for cultural diversity instead of the homogenizing tendencies imposed by mercantilism.
- IV. In the cultural realm, it would support:
  - the stimulation of freely developed creativity instead of strict adherence to norms.
  - variety, pleasure and companionship instead of monotony, boredom and social functionality.
  - opportunities and stimuli in favour of free human communication instead of factual, abstract information controlled by powerful interests.
- V. The development of a social alternative should begin by recognizing that the subordinated insertion of poor countries into the international "globalized" market is resulting in their loss of sovereignty over their territory and resources. This tendency

must be reversed to benefit all people, by strengthening national self-determination while avoiding fundamentalism and stimulating respect and spaces for internal and external cultural plurality, and establishing complementary forms of exchange.

- VI. Processes of economic and territorial integration will be required within each country, region, and rural and urban area, along with the establishment of policies, instruments and action plans that would initiate a broad-based process of decentralized, democratic and plural control over each territory and its resources.
- VII. The construction of a social alternative requires the development of territorial strategies, grounded in specific cultures and places that would guarantee social control over energy and natural resources, the wastes deposited there, as well as proposed investments and activities.
- VIII. The new social alternative should recognize economic, ethnic and cultural plurality, as well as the diversity of natural and installed resources within the different territorial units in any country, region, or other geographical unit, in order to seek forms of economic, social and cultural complementarity under democratic control.
- IX. The construction of a new social alternative should establish a better balance between the cities and the countryside so that together they can guarantee a common future. This will require, on the one hand, the establishment of new relationships between rural producers and urban consumers.
- X. It will also entail the development of processes that will allow the city and the countryside to once again have clean water, air and soil, thanks to the development and technical implementation of cycles of consumption and recycling processes.
- XI. More egalitarian relationships between urban producers and rural consumers should be established. The countryside should penetrate the city, bringing nature into the very heart of the city, and enriching the lives of all. Urban green areas should not be limited to recreational parks or green belts, but should include the development of new and old forms of urban agriculture.
- XII. Land and water are an important part of our common heritage. They are limited resources that cannot be increased, and that should not be subject to market forces but rather should be used as a common good.
- XIII. Human societies, as nation-states and on the community level, should regulate land and water to guarantee their appropriate and equitable use according to the limits of the particular territory or basin.
- XIV. The construction of a social alternative should recognize the elements present within traditional and newly emerging community practices that offer a perspective different than that provided by the current model.
- XV. Attempts should be made to conserve and broaden that that already has been won, to promote the multiplication of experiences, and to press for legal, financial and administrative instruments that would favour their development.

- XVI. In order to develop a social alternative, the isolation that surrounds new experiences must be overcome. It will be necessary to promote communication and coordination among such experiences, to accumulate critical knowledge of them, develop new theories and develop social forces to defend, promote and help them spread and multiply.
- XVII. It will be necessary to influence public opinion and to work politically. It will be important to connect with and strengthen the organizations that are doing this work, to join together to build alliances, fronts and coalitions on all levels, from the community to the globe.

*(framework for action)*

- XVIII. The ecologists' motto, 'think globally, act locally', must be complemented by its opposite, so that we not leave our future in the hands of transnational corporations and other large but short-sighted interests.
- XIX. Habitat has been and can be an art, a poetic act, a permanent way of enriching life.
- XX. To achieve that requires not only financial resources but spaces of freedom to encourage the development of the imagination, creativity, and personal and collective expression.
- XXI. Another fundamental condition to achieve the improvement of the quality of life is the establishment of policies and the creation of tools based on fundamental concepts.
- XXII. Give more for less: The deterioration of the quality of life in cities and the precarious conditions in that the great majority of the population lives make it necessary to explore proposals which, even with limited resources, lay the groundwork for slowly beginning to improve the way we inhabit our cities.
- XXIII. This includes the need to:
- explore, value and incorporate the organizational experiences and traditional construction practices and techniques.
  - value and stimulate the housing production processes under the direct control of the organized social groups.
  - support the research, experimentation and development of appropriate technologies for the social production of housing, including organized self-production, mutual aid, and mixed systems.
  - stimulate the potential of the innovative capacity of technicians and the people through joint practices that allow the exchange of knowledge.
  - accumulate the organize the experiences of the organized social sector with the objective of lower production costs, increased productivity and improvements in the

quality of construction.

- implement measures that allow the productive efficiency of the private sector to be reflected in the price to the beneficiaries and in the better quality of the habitat produced.

XXIV. More imagination and less business: Financially-oriented criteria, profit, and the immediate prestige sought by politicians have undermined the ability to imagine options other than the monotonous housing projects in that a good housing design is repeated 1000 times until it becomes abominable. Or, the magic of the market leads to minimal housing, while speculation always turns out to be the maximum.

XXV. In order to overcome these limitations we need to:

- understand and disseminate the reasons behind the harmony achieved on our towns and cities of high architectural and spatial value, despite the diversity of styles applied and the variety of solutions.
- critically analyze contemporary rural and urban spontaneous settlements in order to appreciate their achievements, creativity, and function, and to overcome their superficial image as chaotic, precarious or abnormal.
- take more care in the addition of housing, and, in particular, housing complexes, within the urban fabric, assuring the appropriateness of location and design to the physical characteristics and environment of the place.

XXVI. More participation and fewer norms: Progressively developed housing and neighbourhoods that incorporate the energies and creativity of their inhabitants, if well conceived, can be the seedbed for a rich social experience and a poetic process through that people can leave their own mark on the city and gain rich and habitable spaces in their homes, when and if the norms do not repress the capacity of expression and organizational dynamic of the inhabitants.

XXVII. For that it is necessary to:

- revise standards through that the technical norms are established that order the urban development, housing finance and construction. Such standards should be limited to guaranteeing the physical security of the buildings and the health of their inhabitants, and to ensure that any particular initiative or project does not infringe upon the individual or collective rights of the participants in the housing programs and those of the potential or already established population in the settlement.
- establish regulations that prohibit acts that go against the rights of others such as the invasion of public areas, destruction of the natural or urban landscape, or the blocking of sunlight or ventilation to the neighbouring constructions.
- review regulations establishing prescriptive norms - those that define, order, and determine the housing products - in order to open broader spaces to the joint participation of the population and the technicians in the conception of the urban spaces and housing, the design of the units and other elements, and the development of adequate construction and technological systems.



- guarantee and stimulate the participation of the population in the management of habitat, from the choice of location to the design of individual and social structural spaces as well as linking networks.
- promote the full participation of the population in the formulation of regulations and standards in their community. These can be differentiated by incorporating climatic, cultural, and social variants and those unique to the form in that the different actors - private sector, organized social sector, communities or individual producers - approach habitat production.
- give as much flexibility as possible to the regulating system to allow changes that community and family dynamics require in the adaptation of urban and housing spaces.
- establish regulatory criteria that introduce the gender perspective and that orient toward favouring the development of diverse family activities rather than to predetermined areas, room numbers, and spaces of restricted use.
- incorporate within public policies related to human settlements, a coherent environmental vision with the principles of ecological conservation and improvement of the quality of the human habitat with the goal to harmonize the relation between the natural environment and constructed space.

XXVIII. Stimulate the city of people and limit the city of money: Urban planning, that today is largely limited to momentary agreements among the different actors and especially with the major investors, should be opened up to social participation in order to recover the deep value of our cities as the expressions of their inhabitants.

XXIX. This includes:

- taking measures to avoid forms of spatial discrimination within settlements.
- avoiding the practice of forced evictions that usually originates in speculation interests, negotiations with real estate investors and large constructors, elitist urban planning, and supposed ecological preservation motives applied discriminatively and exclusively in popular settlements.
- prioritizing the participation of the population in the decision-making in all territorial and urban development planning.
- stimulating and supporting the generation of new territorial communities that favour community living and management of the spaces, particularly those that emerge from the organized processes of the population.
- leaving a broad space for individual, family and community creativity in the determination of their private, semi-public and public spaces and of the components within them.

XXX. Prioritize the public over privatization and the exclusion of community living spaces and facilities: The quality of urban life depends upon the number and quality of spaces for

public and community use. Plazas, areas of historic or aesthetic value, walkways, parks and public sports facilities are critical to social well-being, especially for the poor.

XXXI. To achieve this it is necessary to:

- guarantee for all access to safe public spaces for recreation, and community living, taking into special consideration the most vulnerable groups in terms of their income, age, health and physical and mental capacity.
- allow and support the development and management of public spaces and facilities under social control, especially in the settlements and housing complexes generated at the initiative of the organized groups.
- ensure a greater popular involvement in the handling of initiatives and financial resources by the municipalities interested in the development and operation of public spaces.
- complement the enjoyment of public spaces and residential areas with the close location of basic facilities such as schools, clinics, markets, religious buildings and other common places.
- stimulate the development of urban facilities that meet the needs of women: day care centres, communal kitchens, laundromats, orchards, workshops, and other common spaces.

XXXII. Social movement actors should negotiate mechanisms that allow them to participate in the management, administration, maintenance, control and efficient and sustainable recovery of the public resources.

XXXIII. The role of women in habitat development and management, neighbourhood resource generation and mobilization, and survival strategies must be recognized and made visible.

*(integration with nature)*

XXXIV. All human beings struggle for an adequate place to live and a healthy environment. Environmental deterioration should not be identified with the process of putting the shovel to the earth. The concept of environment introduces human intervention in the ecological balance of the planet. A series of new balances is required that will guarantee the preservation of nature and a healthy environment for all.

XXXV. To achieve that it is indispensable to:

- incorporate ecological criteria within the management of urban as well as rural development.
- plan human settlements according to the availability of resources and the environmental regeneration capacity of the region in that they are located.

- establish areas of ecological protection in fishing, agricultural, and other areas of natural environmental value, in the regions occupied by indigenous populations or vulnerable ethnic groups, and around urban areas.
- better understand, preserve and develop the relation between traditional cultures and the use of material resources in harmony with nature.
- incorporate ecological criteria in the selection of construction materials and finishings to guarantee both a rational use of resources and healthy and comfortable environmental conditions.
- consider the climate and environmental conditions in determination of design criteria of settlements and housing.

*(role of States)*

- XXXVI. The role of the States has been co-opted and disempowered by globalization and must be converted from that of protector of capital interests to regulator for the fulfilment of the people's interests.
- XXXVII. The territories and cultures of indigenous communities must be respected, and their relative autonomy recognized.
- XXXVIII. Before any social group or territorial unit is "integrated into the global market," there must be an effort to promote the widespread exchange of goods and services, including nonmonetary forms of exchange. This would facilitate the generation of economic activity within every territorial unit. It would prevent the external extraction of resources without local benefits and would allow existing financial resources to remain longer to support community initiatives, projects and survival.
- XXXIX. The mobilization of habitat resources is the right and responsibility of all.
- XL. Housing, as a massive problem and a universal right, requires the participation of every sector of the population for its fulfilment. The State, as the agent with primary responsibility for responding to this problem, should provide the conditions necessary for such participation.
- XLI. The State cannot abandon its responsibilities as planner and redistributer of the national income toward greater equity, for that it should facilitate the democratic management and control of its resources.
- XLII. The responsibility for the generation and recovery of resources for habitat construction is shared by the distinct sectors of society: the State, the social organizations and the private sector.
- XLIII. Resources must be defined in the creation of housing. The sources of origin, investment and distribution priorities, and administration mechanisms must be identified through negotiations among social organizations, the State and the private sector.

XLIV. Strengthening the social production of housing demands that the States:

- develop mechanisms for administrative support and promotion among a diversity of public entities, including: simplification of paperwork such as permits, fiscal stimuli, and training programs.
- recognize the social organizations as collective subjects of credit. This requires the creation of specific procedures for the provision and administration of credit, collateral, forms of ownership and collection.
- establish clearly defined rules, taking into account the differences within the popular sectors, including those related to gender, to the ways in that popular sectors obtain their income, to the true ability to save and make payments, and to the conditions of the vulnerable sectors.

*(financial resources)*

XLV. The resolve expressed in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, in Agenda 21, and in the United Nations General Assembly's call for the Habitat II conference to achieve housing for all, should be translated into more financial resources for housing and policies that favour an equitable social distribution of resources.

XLVI. Finance should be understood in terms of the whole of the resources necessary for the management, operation and maintenance of the habitat, which encompasses housing, public and social services, and the environment as an inseparable whole.

XLVII. Grassroots social organizations, housing cooperatives and the NGOs that support them have more than 30 years of accumulated experience. They have a lot to offer in the formulation and administration of financial policies to be applied to the habitat.

XLVIII. Past practice shows that resources for housing need not be limited to financial resources. The popular sectors that have not yet been robbed by technocratic policies and the "modernizing" forces of industrialization and mercantilization of their ability to do for themselves, still possess abilities and resources that they use creatively to improve their housing.

XLIX. Housing finance, credit and subsidy policies should operate closely linked to urban development policies, to access to land, to urban infrastructure investment, and to the control of the costs of the building materials.

L. The State should support the access of the lowest income sectors to housing and an adequate habitat through subsidies from fiscal resources.

LI. Subsidies can be direct or indirect. In the case of subsidies to low-income sectors and especially to the social producers, this should be tied in direct and transparent form to housing payments.

LII. A subsidy should be understood as a complementary resource. It should be sufficient to cover the basic needs of the people without debt capacity, and with preferential

application to single parent households.

- LIII. Socially produced housing operates under the control of popular groups. Its logic runs counter to that of private companies and certain governmental agencies that produce low-income housing.
- LIV. Socially produced housing requires access to public resources under conditions that respond to the social production process. Housing is a social and a family process, with the goal of producing a place in that to live. This contrasts with private companies that see housing as a form of merchandise to be sold on the market.
- LV. The financing of socially produced housing requires recognition by the State of the social organizations that promote it, both in fact and as a right, such as cooperatives, associations, unions, technical support groups, and neighbourhood committees.
- LVI. It also requires mechanisms based on social processes and practices that take into account the needs, characteristics and possibilities of the population to be financed. It should:
- create lines of credit in accordance with the process for purchase of land, development of projects, delivery of services, construction (or self-construction or other system combining both modes), and all other aspects of human settlements.
  - create options that would respond to the housing realities of the popular sectors, including serviced plots, legalization of land, progressive housing, improvement and rehabilitation of existing housing, finished housing, and the production and distribution of construction materials.
  - incorporate a great degree of flexibility, allowing for all sorts of combinations in order to respond to the great diversity of social initiatives. The population linked to social housing production should participate in the different stages of the project related to their formulation, planning, design, execution, follow-up, evaluation and control. The finance initiatives directed to these sectors should recognize all the facts in the costs of the housing production and also the social and public service implementation process.
- LVII. In order to operate with greater efficiency, socially produced housing may require that public financial resources be complemented with:
- resources mobilized by the communities themselves, that should be accepted, supported and accounted for in the final value of the housing.
  - resources from external finance and cooperation, that should be oriented toward promotion of management, administration and control capacity for those that participate in the housing programs.
- LVIII. The strengthening of the popular economy to produce and manage the community's own habitat is crucial since it favours the viability and responsible administration of the programs promoted by popular organizations. This requires that the public agencies that finance housing accept and financially support:

- the inclusion of areas for economic activities within housing units and housing projects, and allow for profitable infrastructure to be built under the control of the community.
- provisions within the financing for the on-site production of materials and housing components by the group itself.
- cross-subsidies controlled by social organizations within the housing complexes that they promote.

(right to housing)

- LIX. The legal foundation for the promotion, defense and respect of the right to housing is recognized in a number of instruments of international law.
- LX. These instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Conditions of Refugees; and the International Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.
- LXI. The right to housing is contemplated in international human rights legislation related to development, standards of living, the rights of children, labour legislation and other instruments.
- LXII. In this era of mercantilism and vicious fundamentalisms, the respect for and enforcement of the right to housing is a primary issue, since it makes a commitment to the quality of life in the future.
- LXIII. The right to housing is part of the struggle of all peoples to achieve social and cultural self-determination, to build community and society, and to live in peace with justice.
- LXIV. This right is a lifetime right, and its application should reflect and allow for change throughout the lifetime of each individual. Needs change over time for different age groups and genders according to cultural, economic and other conditions.
- LXV. The defense and promotion of the right to housing does not imply the defense of any particular form of land tenancy. It does mean guaranteeing the defense and promotion, under any regime, of the right of each woman, man and child to enjoy an adequate space that guarantees dignity, privacy, safety and permanence, in that they can realize their activities and their potential, and under conditions in that their tenancy is socially and legally protected.
- LXVI. The right to housing includes the right to choose and determine where and how one will live, to remain there, and to participate in all decisions and activities that affect the place and territory of one's residence.
- LXVII. The enjoyment of the right to housing means freedom from the threat of eviction, and protection from forced evictions and the violent destruction of one's home.

- LXVIII. The right to housing includes the right to a healthy and safe environment for the adequate development of one's life. The right to a place to live should harmonize and not oppose the right to preserve and improve the environmental quality for all.
- LXIX. The enforcement of the right to housing demands policies that do not promote social, political or economic segregation. Segregation prevents fulfilment of these rights, neutralizing, dividing and weakening people, and concentrating and multiplying poverty, oppression and alienation.
- LXX. The right to housing includes respect for the cultural identities of different social groups as well as their right to local, national and international self-determination. The respect for and strengthening of human values requires that housing be treated not only as a product but also as a social process.
- LXXI. The strengthening of a people's culture is a basic element for the development of its power. This also includes the right of people to develop their own social organizations and habitat according to their own identities.
- LXXII. Housing should be affordable and accessible, and should not be subject to speculation under any regime or society.
- LXXIII. Accessibility to housing includes access to necessary resources and services.
- LXXIV. This right includes the right to directly participate in and control the process of developing and conserving the local and regional environment, as well as planning and assigning of resources. This does not preclude the responsibility of the State to participate and to guarantee these rights.
- LXXV. It includes the right to be sufficiently informed, connected and organized, having sufficient knowledge of all factors that might influence free choice regarding where to live, as well as other decisions that affect the enjoyment of life, the environment and society.
- LXXVI. The right to housing includes the right to access to scientific, technical and professional knowledge. Institutional mechanisms should be promoted to facilitate the decentralization and general accessibility of knowledge. The technical and professional level achieved in any country should be to the benefit of all. Low-income populations have usually been marginalized from progress.
- LXXVII. It includes the right to organize and participate in the definition, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of public policies related to habitat.
- LXXVIII. The right to housing also includes the right to act, through the use of legal, social and political resources, to guarantee the enforcement of all those rights that allow the implementation of the fundamental right to a place to live in peace with dignity.

(democratic governance)

- LXXIX. True democracy requires the development of equal opportunities to access information,

decision-making and processes, and the goods and services produced by society. It includes strengthening representative democracy and opening up politically and legally recognized channels for the free exercise of participatory democracy and citizenship.

- LXXX. Access to sufficient and adequate information, including references to viable options and alternatives, is an indispensable condition for real participation. The guarantee of security, peace, and all citizen rights are also fundamental and necessary conditions for democratic habitat management.
- LXXXI. The trends toward the concentration of resources in large cities and regional centres need to be reversed, so that resources can be channelled toward less developed or potentially strategic towns and regions. This includes a pluralistic integration of territory based on the economic, social and cultural complementarities between places and regions.
- LXXXII. A balanced distribution of productive and distributive activities within any given territory is required, as well as equal access to land and the city for different social sectors.
- LXXXIII. In order to achieve democratic habitat management, it is necessary to overcome technocratic planning through political democratization and the creation of instruments that promote and channel broad citizen participation, with special attention to women, vulnerable groups, and ethnic, religious and other minorities.
- LXXXIV. Democratic habitat management requires the recognition and strengthening of regional, local and community autonomy and the exercise of mechanisms and tools that allow for follow-up, monitoring and accountability.
- LXXXV. Planning must become an instrument for the advancement toward distributive equity, sustainable resource use and protection of the rights of all to adequate space for the development of their economic, social and shelter activities.
- LXXXVI. Instruments need to be created for the autonomous participation of social organizations, NGOs, professional societies and other groups in the formulation of policies, plans and programs, and in decision-making at all levels of government and sectoral administration.
- LXXXVII. Social groups must have access to adequate channels and information media to allow the communities to democratize the dialogue and the information related to habitat.
- LXXXVIII. Forms of planning, production, administration and government in towns and cities should be submitted to society's participation and control, with priority to the strengthening and the autonomy of local and community public powers.
- LXXXIX. An in-depth examination of all policies and actions (such as elitist planning, privatization and speculation) that promote urban segregation, the deterioration of rural living conditions, the expulsion of the poor to the urban peripheries, evictions, and exclusion from access to goods and services is required.
- XC. Representative bodies need to be strengthened in order for them to participate more



effectively in urban and neighbourhood planning, in the definition of urban development policies, in the development of operative instruments and in the formulation of mechanisms and indicators for monitoring and evaluating housing and other urban programs.

- XCI. Public institutions that promote and fund housing programs need to be democratized. Organizations of those seeking housing, nongovernmental organizations, and the professionals that support them should all participate in creating policies and programs concerning land, housing, the legalization of tenancy, neighbourhood up-grading, disaster prevention and relief, and access to infrastructure and services.
- XCII. Recognized bodies are required for monitoring progress, integrated by social organizations able to control the implementation of policies, instruments, and governmental programs that affect habitat.