



Habitat International Coalition

Statement to the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III Nairobi, 16 April 2015

Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. My name is Davinder Lamba, former president and representative of Habitat International Coalition (HIC), the global network for housing and land rights formed in Vancouver in 1976, and today representing more than 300 social movements, nongovernmental and academic organizations on every continent.

Our coalition believes Habitat III must preserve three basic principles:

- (1) Processes must be at least as inclusive as Habitat II;
- (2) We should maintain and build on the Habitat Agenda, and not produce a narrow “urban agenda”; and
- (3) Human rights and good governance must continue to anchor and guide global human settlement policy and commitments.

The Habitat III process and contents must be grounded in:

- (1) A comprehensive evaluation of progress meeting the Habitat II commitments;
- (2) A review of housing rights and good governance practices consistent with the Habitat II promise including gender equality and benefitting from lessons learned and improved understanding of the issues since Habitat II; and
- (3) Preparation for emerging human settlements development challenges including improving “balanced rural and urban development” as pledged since Habitat 1976.

States and governments reaffirmed their obligations to uphold the right to adequate housing 61 times in the Habitat II documents. This included their pledge to protect communities from and redress forced evictions and to combat homelessness. Unfortunately, neither of these core commitments is mentioned in the guidelines for preparing Habitat III National Reports.

Over the past 20 years, HIC and many other stakeholders have developed and further clarified the human rights and good governance concepts implied in Habitat II. Together, we have identified the following key elements to include among the New Habitat Agenda commitments:

The claim for all people’s **Right to the City** has emerged in global, local and regional charters, UCLG’s “Charter Agenda on Human Rights in the City” and is led by a growing Global Platform for the Right to the City.

The **Social production of habitat**, or people’s processes to construct and manage housing and the built environment, is often the only choice facing marginalized

communities. These processes contribute to providing decent living spaces, strengthening local economies and social development.

The social function of land and property, to the benefit of the common good, prioritizing those with the greatest need.

Surplus- and land-value capture (a.k.a. LVC) which are expressions of the Habitat II commitment to “innovative instruments that capture gains in land value and recover public investments.”

Local fiscal systems that generate inclusive people-centered development outcomes

Holistic habitat planning that maintains city-region food systems and respects the urban-rural continuum.

Accountability for violations of habitat rights and extraterritorial obligations of states and private sector, including: forced evictions; population transfer and settler colonies in occupied territory; land grabbing; and other gross violations which have continued with impunity in every region since Habitat II. Reparation for those affected must also be ensured.

Resilience: Human settlements and their inhabitants must be more resilient but our focus should be on addressing the root causes of environmental and economic crises and the accountability of responsible parties.

Urbanization is not inevitable. The distribution of urban wealth and poverty are systemic, but also grounded in deliberate choices and should not be exempt from needed restraint.

Distribution of wealth and not only growth is a critical measure of development, and policy and governance success. States and governments would fail in their duties to impoverished citizens if Habitat III did not commit to wealth redistribution.

The Habitat II principles and commitments for a better world, although never fully operationalized or evaluated, provide a solid basis for the New Habitat Agenda in 2016.

This time we must have comprehensive targets to be continuously monitored nationally and internationally. There is also the opportunity to reform UN Habitat both aligning it with the UN Charter triple purposes - security, development and human rights and developing formal ongoing consultation mechanisms with civil society organizations. A New Habitat Agenda that falls short of these standards risks being as neglected as Habitat II's broken promises, squandering the great efforts and resources invested in this Habitat III process and the 40 preceding years of normative development.

Thank you, Madam Co-Chair, for allowing HIC to present its perspective and proposals.