



HIC - HIC Global Policy Declaration

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Habitat International Coalition

INTRODUCTION

Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is an independent, international non-profit organisation working in the area of housing and human settlements. It is a federation of over 200 organizations throughout the world.

HIC was founded in 1978 as the Committee of Non-Governmental Human Settlements Organizations. In 1987 the organisation performed an in-depth review of its constitution, structure and program. Its main decisions are made at a General Assembly which meets at least once a year and its affairs are managed by a Steering Council chosen on a regional basis by its member organisations.

HIC is currently setting up regional networks in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Europe and North America. Its global secretariat is located in Mexico.

OBJETIVES

HIC's basic objectives expressed in Article 2 of its Constitution are:

1.The association is devoted to action for the recognition and implementation of the right of everyone to a place in which to live in peace and dignity, both in developing and developed countries.

2.It acts as an international pressure group in defence of the rights of the homeless, the poor and the inadequately housed. It promotes the creation of awareness among the public in general about human settlements problems as well as the exchange of information on these problems and their solutions among its members. It functions as a platform for the formulation of non-governmental organizations policies and strategies in the field of human settlements. It acts as their spokesperson in contacts with international organizations, such as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and donor agencies.

3.The association promotes these objectives by means of:

- campaigns and lobbying efforts, alone or in cooperation with other non-governmental organizations;
- seminars, conferences and workshops;
- publication of treaties, statements, reports, newsletters and other study and research materials;
- research and other projects,
- support to networks and exchange of information among its members and other non-governmental or community organizations;
- any other legal venue.

4.The association is based on the principle of decentralizing its activities throughout different regions of the world.

5.The association is a non-profit organisation.

POLICY STATEMENT

1.Habitat International Coalition was created in answer to the need to act at a worldwide level for establishing the right of every child, woman and man to a safe place to live in dignity.

2.HIC understands housing as an instrument for the promotion of justice, equality and peace; the expression of diverse cultures; individual and community self-determination; for the fight against discrimination, alienation and disorganisation; and the regeneration of the environment and societies throughout the world, in keeping



with an outlook of a living earth as a home for us all. HIC especially recognises the position of women, both as an object of discrimination as well as among the main actors in the struggle for change.

3.It is the conviction of HIC that the housing problem is not a localized problem nor a problem which only affects certain sectors of society, such as persons living in poverty, nor can it be seen as isolated from other social aspects. It is rather a structural factor which is interrelated with market and State predominance, the inhibition of local initiatives and the global depletion of resources and addressing the same is therefore a collective responsibility.

HIC believes that the same should not only be seen as an individual problem nor resolved by means of projects, but rather through the creation of conditions under which everyone will be able to obtain and retain proper housing. In keeping with the same, the organisation directs its efforts towards supporting the struggle for the right to housing and the promotion of participatory promotion policies in the field of housing and human settlements.

4.HIC sees itself and its work as part of a wider-reaching world movement at popular, professional and governmental levels for the establishment of housing as a fundamental human right. HIC believes in the basic interrelation between local and global considerations.

5.HIC believes that governments are responsible at global, national and local levels for creating conditions by which all persons can access proper housing, thus building their own communities and cultures. This includes ensuring access to resources, guaranteeing the freedom to use the same as locally appropriate and, when needed, the establishment of market operation controls.

6.It is HIC's maximum prevailing objective to strengthen the position and capacities of grassroots groups and non-governmental groups which support the same. In keeping with this outlook, HIC affirms that these non-governmental organisations should recognise and promote the autonomy of grassroots organisations.

7.HIC seeks to promote popular initiative and channel the support of state and market-based entities.

8.HIC recognises that local action should follow several lines of action, depending on the specific political, economic and social situation. Specifically, relations between grassroots organisations and non-governmental organisations on one hand and state and market-based entities on the other hand, range from cooperation to conflict.

9.HIC recognises that grassroots and non-governmental organisations are able to more effectively direct their strategies if these are well-organised at local, national, regional and global levels; if they can speak as just one voice before authorities and the public; if they are able to present technical, organisational and administrative solutions related to planning, construction and maintenance of housing and barrios and the regeneration of their local environment; and if the same are able to mobilise their members when this becomes necessary.

In turn, HIC proposes to support community and non-governmental groups to become better organized at different levels and to improve their capacities by means of the interchange of experiences and information, research and training; and, in keeping with interchange and consultation, to integrate their initiatives and implement the same, particularly at regional and global levels, including the United Nations.

10.HIC activities have five fundamental purposes or efforts:

- fighting for the recognition and achievement of housing as a human right;
- fighting for recognition of grassroots and non-governmental organisations which
- support the same as key actors in this process;
- promoting participatory promotion policies and the elevation of the same to legal and financial commitments;
- promoting solidarity between its members as well as among those who fight for housing rights wherever they may be;
- building alliances with similarly-thinking social movements which work for peace, dignity and sustained development.

11.In the fulfilment of its duties, HIC will pay special attention to the following areas, recognising the position and contribution of women in general:



- housing status in both rural and urban areas;
- the right of all people to access housing resources, including land, construction materials, water, fuel, financing and technology;
- expansion of its activities in countries which are presently poorly represented, including the First World and Second World;
- tenant, immigrant and refugee status;
- the problem of evictions;
- the right to free association of grassroots groups;
- the relationship between people and the land;
- the right to knowledge and the freedom of receiving and providing information;
- research regarding the economic and socio-political framework of the housing deficit

12. In order to meet its objectives, HIC will organise towards:

- obtaining support and possibly membership of grassroots and non-governmental organisations, as well as other professional organisations which work in the field of human settlements and organisations which represent wide-reaching sectors of public opinion such as trade unions, women's rights organisations, church organisations, etc;
- gaining recognition as an organisation which specialises in housing and human settlements;
- becoming recognised by governments, international organisations and the media as a housing issues interlocutor;
- maintaining dialogue with international governmental organisations such as Habitat, Human Rights and other United Nations and World Bank agencies which exert influence on national housing policies and projects.

13. A first draft of the Housing Rights Declaration was drawn up at a HIC Workshop held April 1989 in Cartagena, Colombia. This document will be widely publicized with a view to begin discussion of the same among its members and other grassroots and non-governmental organizations as part of a Global Campaign for Housing Rights. The results of this discussion will be used for the drawing up of principles which must be considered for the formulation of a Housing Rights Agreement.

Meanwhile, HIC will continue its efforts to ensure that the formulation of said Agreement is included on the United Nations agenda.

14. HIC welcomes with interest the declaration contained in the Global Housing Strategy up to the year 2000 and other recent United Nations resolutions, in which governments are encouraged to participate in coalitions and associations with the non-governmental sector in an effort to resolve the serious problem of housing shortages. HIC is also pleased to know that the Executive Director of CNUAH for Functions, Responsibilities and Capacities in the Public and Non-Governmental Sectors in terms of Human Settlements recognizes a third community sector, clearly differentiated for both the market-based private sector and the public sector.

In dialogue with United Nations and national government entities, HIC exerts pressure for the implementation of the aforementioned resolutions in order to work towards the establishment of measures and institutions at international, national and local levels leading to community and grassroots organisations for the planning, construction and maintenance of housing and barrios.

HIC will continue to insist that participatory promotion policies do not lead to governments avoiding their responsibilities in the human settlements sector, that coalitions proposed are with grassroots and non-governmental organisations whose primary objective is working for the benefit of needy communities without considering profit; that the position of grassroots and non-governmental organisations as well as autonomous organisations level is not compromised; and that the main objective of these policies be the creation of the most favourable conditions possible for the development of self-organized and self-managed settlement programs determined at local levels.