



UCLG Committee
on Social Inclusion,
Participatory Democracy
and Human Rights

**JOINT DECLARATION OF
HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION (HIC),
THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL INCLUSION, PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND
HUMAN RIGHTS OF UCLG,¹ THE FORUM OF PERIPHERAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES
(FALP) AND MERCOCIUDADES REGARDING THE 7TH WORLD URBAN FORUM**

4 April 2014

1. From 5 to 11 April 2014 will take place in Medellin (Colombia) the seventh edition of the World Urban Forum (WUF), the biennial meeting convened by UN-HABITAT in order to discuss the most pressing problems of urban reality. This year, the central theme will be the "**Equity Urban in the Development – Cities for Life.**"
2. The social movements, civil society organizations, professionals and activists that formed the Coalition for Habitat (HIC), along with the local authorities that make up the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Forum of Peripheral Local Authorities (FALP) and Mercociudades, express through this joint Declaration their political position with respect to the **conceptual approach of WUF 7.**
3. No doubt, today's urban world is deeply unequal and the inhabitants of cities and towns are suffering the effects of this reality in its multiple dimensions: poverty and difficult access to adequate food; lack of access to employment and job insecurity; scarcity of land and adequate housing; territorial segregation; poor provision of basic services; multimodal transportation systems and public spaces of quality; construction of megaprojects that end up with the eviction and forced displacement of local population; educational and health care deficits; unequal and discriminatory treatment towards women, different sexual orientations or minority ethno-cultural groups; lack of personal autonomy by reason of age, illness or disability; vulnerable situation of migrants; absence of equal opportunities for young people with special attention for those in a situation of social risk; lack of attention to children and the elderly; criminalization of social protest... In other words, **urban inequality derives from the systematic deprivation of essential rights of citizenship** for much of the population.
4. For all these reasons, **we do not share** the argument exposed in the concept note of the VII WUF that asserts that the greater the growth, the greater the equity. This synthetic formula represents a very impoverishing vision the variety of urban problems without even relate them to more structural issues. The growing gap between rich and poor shows that the benefits of growth are not distributed in an equitable manner; on the contrary, they tend to concentrate in the hands of those who have more. Without transversal policies of redistribution of wealth at place at local, national, regional and global levels, the growth = equity equation is a very dangerous fallacy that encourages the destruction of the planet and does not question the current model of production, accumulation and irresponsible consumption.
5. Therefore, in our view, working for more-equitable cities indeed relies on claiming a greater **spatial and social justice** through the respect, protection and full realization of **civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights** for present and future generations. It also implies institutionalizing **participatory democracy** as a backbone of the guarantee of rights, and sustainability and effectiveness of public policies. At the same time, it requires acknowledging the efforts that communities, peoples, social movements and local

¹ This declaration does not reflect the position of UCLG, but only the one of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (through its Collegiate presidency).

governments are developing every day to improve life in the cities. This must be the conceptual framework for the development of long-term policies for the defense of the equity in our territories.

6. Considering the primacy given in the theoretical foundation of the concept paper of the WUF to the objectives of economic growth and development, we put forward criteria of spatial and social justice, and **dignified life** for all. We reject the predominantly developmental logic and propose cultural, social, economic and political changes more respectful with nature and the humanity as a whole, present and future.
7. In this sense, we defend the concept of the **right to the city**, which we understand as the equitable enjoyment of the benefits and opportunities that must offer the urban environment (work, health, education, housing, symbolic resources, political participation, etc.) and as a tool to imagine and build another possible city: democratic, sustainable, equitable, solidary and respectful with rural realities. In short, we claim the need to reverse the urban dynamics, putting people and not to the market at the center of the urban policy agenda.
8. Therefore, **we do not subscribe to the definition of "Equity in Development"** proposed by UN-Habitat and make a call so that the debates of the WUF are developed instead from the principles that emanate from the concept of "Cities for Life" (also mentioned in the concept note), which collects more than two decades of experiences and proposals of civil society and better reflects the city that we want, and we can build.
9. With this vision, we, representatives of urban social movements, civil society and local authorities members of the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, the Forum of Peripheral Local Authorities (FALP) and Mercociudades make this public declaration to show our commitment to work together in the process leading to the Habitat III UN Summit. Our goal is that it don't miss each and every one of the human rights recognized at the international level; that the discussions are not carried out with their backs to the rural areas; and that the right to the city is recognized in the **new Habitat Agenda**, together with measures, indicators and instruments for its implementation at global, regional and local level.
10. Finally, we urge the United Nations as a whole to democratize decision-making spaces, and the UN-Habitat to ensure effective participation of civil society and local authorities in the preparation, organization and realization of the **Habitat III Conference**. We also challenge UN-Habitat to transform the WUF into a real space for debate and collective construction, to develop an approach to urban issues based on a human rights perspective in collaboration with the UN Human Rights Council, and to strengthen the role of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) as a mechanism to develop human rights-framed dialogue between local and national governments.

This statement is open to those groups, networks or organizations of civil society and local governments who share its principles. Therefore, we launched an appeal to sign it and disseminate it among its members.



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