

# STATEMENT OF THE BRAZILIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

Brazilian civil society organizations, gathered in São Paulo on May 31 of 2016, come through the present Statement to express themselves about the content of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), to be adopted at the Third UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III. Firstly, we recognize that the proposal of the Zero Draft advances towards the understanding of the city and the housing policy in an integrated manner, whether on the network of cities and connected on other scales of government, or articulated to other policies and to the urban development process as a whole.

However, we believe that for the construction of a NUA effectively consistent with the reality of cities today, an in-depth analysis regarding to what extent have we advanced or not, in relation to the commitments made at Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996, is missing – as a way to explicit the basis that served as a reference for the construction of the Agenda with its structuring principles, agenda means of implementation and monitoring.

The proposed Agenda released thus far presents a language that tries to incorporate an alleged neutrality of the urban development process, which does not reflect the reality of exclusion, regression and violations of rights experienced daily by the population. It does not recognize or emphasize the various conflicts that permeate this process, as the land and social-environmental conflicts and political struggle for public space present in different parts of the world.

Our assessment is, in the aspect of vulnerabilities, that the document does not deepen the issues related to inequality and exclusion experienced by marginalized groups. In the document, the analysis revolves around urban poverty and the treatment of vulnerable citizens only through the income component, failing to advance on the social-territorial inequalities perspective (access to services, goods and opportunities). Women, youth, black population, elderly, ethnic minorities (such as indigenous, Roma, etc.) and LGBTI's are the most vulnerable groups not only with regard to urban segregation and social exclusion, but also urban violence and public security, underexplored aspects in the NUA. Only through the acknowledgment of these inequalities, is it possible to develop solutions that treat with greater attention the difficulties faced in urban and rural life by these groups.

Among the principles, consolidated in the definition of "Our View", should be explicitly present: the search for equity, the fair distribution of the costs and benefits of urbanization, the social function of land tenure and property, among others. In an Agenda that intends on effectively changing the paradigm of urban development, what is noticeable, however, is an attempt to include different and, often, conflicting views.

The document points out, on one hand, to the necessity of building inclusive urban economies; on the other, in contradiction, to competitiveness as a goal that should be pursued by cities. We believe that this last view should be eliminated from the agenda, being vital the establishment of solidarity and cooperation among cities and among different agents for a global movement of transformation of the urban development. Notwithstanding, we understand that the vision of productivity in the cities should be replaced by the notion of sustainability.

Although the document mentions the Right to the City (R2C), it incorrectly assumes the concept to be equivalent to the idea of a "city for all". While the concept of "city for all" emerged only recently and relates foremost to the dimension of equality and of non-discrimination in cities; the concept of R2C has been built through decades, from base movements, and reaffirms the sense of city as commons. It is, thus, a much broader concept than the first, by articulating the varied dimension of cities and urban life (public spaces, land, housing, etc.), as exemplified by the final document presented by Policy Unit 01. We believe, therefore, that the NUA should recognize the R2C as a human rights approach for cities and as a platform of action for government, civil society and private sector, with sights to achieve just, inclusive and sustainable cities.

In this sense, it is important for the NUA to define more clearly the role of the private sector in the process of urban development beyond the public-private partnerships. It is important to provide mechanisms of participation, social control, management and transparency for its performance and in the relationships established with the public sector and society. It is thus necessary, to have national policies regulating



**large companies acting in the sector and also in the real estate market.** There should be foreseen policies too, which manage to succeed in reversing the current excluding pattern of urban development, **de-concentrating private property and redistributing of richness and benefits** stemming from the process of making cities, also through the creation of progressive taxation and inversion of priorities in investments.

The NUA, from the land perspective, practically **does not approach the issues of informal settlement, land and property concentration** and does not present concrete proposals for the regulation of the real estate market, essential points for the democratization of the access to urban land. For that, it would be important to have **the recognition of the social function of tenure and property** in the Agenda, as well as the establishment of mechanisms for the **prevention and mediation of land conflicts** and guarantees of secure land tenure.

The current proposal of the NUA is still silent when it comes to some key aspects of the housing policy today, such as: the debate about the financing of the habitat production and its current process of financialization; the ongoing process of weakening different land tenure forms, not making the necessary critic to the hegemonic speech of individual private property as the one-size-fits-all model; the necessity to prioritize integrated, multidimensional and participative interventions in informal settlements, as well as measures of rights recognition. Hence, in order to advance in the realization of the right to adequate housing and tenure security, **it is essential that the NUA reinforces the importance of offering public policies with a diversity of programs, housing solutions and ways of securing tenure**, elucidating that the habitation situation cannot be solved with only one model. It is necessary, for instance, to highlight the importance of governmental support to social production of habitat processes, enabling an offer of quality, with good location and strengthening of social bonds.

The conception of public spaces that are accessible, safe, culturally diverse, broadly open to social interaction, political participation and sociocultural manifestations, already included in the NUA, is positive and should be better specified between the commitments and forms of execution of it. It is important, mainly, to **overcome the notion that confuses public spaces with property owned and managed by the State**, advancing to the idea of **public spaces as common goods**, also with the possibility of social and collective management. Another aspect, which should be present in the Agenda is the role that could be played by public spaces, in the **promotion of popular and solidary economies**, with commitments of non-discrimination of informal workers, whether they are nationals or immigrants. In the same sense, there should be a bigger deepening in the **political and cultural dimension of the use of public spaces**, making sure there is no repression or criminalization of the multiple expressions of citizenship. Another element absent in the text is the allocation of public spaces in urban areas and of urban-rural transition, which should be destined to environmental preservation and sustainable and urban agriculture.

Lastly, as a reinforcing measure of the importance of the document, as well as an incentive for it to be put in practice, we believe to be crucial the **creation of a monitoring panel of implementation of the Agenda**, articulating both, multiple UN agencies and programs and other relevant actors of different segments of society. **We strongly believe that all the above mentioned claims and suggestions are fundamental in order to achieve sustainable, inclusive and just cities in the next 20 years.**

**ORGANIZATIONS:** ActionAid Brasil; Instituto A Cidade Precisa de Você; Associação Nacional de Transportes Públicos; Central de Movimentos Populares; Centro de Direitos Econômicos e Sociais; Centro Dom Hélder Câmara de Estudos e Ação Social (CENDHEC); Centro Gaspar Garcia; Confederação Nacional das Associações de Moradores; Engajamundo; Escola de Governo São Paulo; Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (FASE); Federação Interestadual de Sindicatos de Engenheiros; Federação Nacional dos Arquitetos; Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana; Frente de Luta por Moradia; Fundo Socioambiental Casa; Global Platform for the Right to the City; Habitat para Humanidade Brasil; Instituto Brasileiro de Direito Urbanístico; Instituto Pólis; Grupo de Pesquisa Lugar Comum/FAUFBA; Movimento Nacional de Luta por Moradia; Grupo de Pesquisa Meio Ambiente Urbano da PUC/SP; Rede Interação; StreetNet; Terra de Direitos; Teto - Brasil; União de Moradia da Zona Sul; União dos Movimentos de Moradia de São Paulo; União Nacional por Moradia Popular; União por Moradia Popular do Rio de Janeiro; Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

