



STATEMENT BY SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE PREPARATION OF THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HABITAT III) UNDER THE 2014 WORLD HABITAT DAY

The General Assembly of the United Nations has called for the year 2016 to host the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, also known as Habitat III. Held this month of September, it will be the first preparatory meeting, convening in New York.

For civil society organizations internationally, this conference means the possibility of a New Habitat Agenda, not just a New Urban Agenda that considers rural and urban areas as one continuous territory. It will identify international standards and obligations to recognize the right the city, the right to land and territory, as well as environment-friendly transport and energy quality.

In 1976, the year in which the HABITAT I Conference was held in Vancouver, a Declaration on Human Settlements was formed. Though it was established during a period of rising awareness of rapid urbanization, it never lost sight of the rural-city relationship. At HABITAT II held in Istanbul in 1996, thanks to the participation of civil society, significant advances were achieved for the recognition of the right to housing. This heavily impacted the Habitat Agenda that emerged from the conference. We cannot, however, ignore the current accelerated processes of speculative development, witnessed around the world. It often violates basic human rights, and it leads to irrational sprawl and social segregation with serious impacts on the lives of human beings, nature and territories, as well as in everyday social life. Moreover, it harms the possibility of realizing the right of all people, without any discrimination, to a safe space and home to live in peace and dignity.

To our organizations-even when the policies of recent decades have sought to destroy the field and empty its population in favor of big industry businesses that have allowed cities to grow at an expense- the continuum between the rural and urban, as well as the symbiotic relationship between the two cannot be ignored. We disagree with the hegemonic model of development in which these policies are derived, which are causing the seizure of communities' territories, indigenous peoples and peasants, destruction of habitat and sources of income. It has also increased criminal violence that provokes mass migrations, increased poverty, and a loss of culture and community practices. All the above makes all other forms of life impossible for those not concentrated in the cities.

The dire consequences above requires that the discussions, proposals and resolutions of HABITAT III focus primarily on human rights and obligations that follow from these negative effects for the states. From grassroots and civil society organizations exist alternatives and proposals that should be considered in what will be the first global conference post 2015, such as: the necessary evaluation of the implementation of the Habitat II Agenda and corresponding Global Plan of Action; the promotion of measures to overcome inequalities, discrimination, segregation and lack of opportunity to access decent housing and living standards for all in both the city and country; the development of proposals to create instruments for participatory planning and budgeting, institutional support for the social production of habitat, the democratization of areas of territorial management, citizen control and coordination of the public sector with the planning sectors, production and habitat management, as well as the recognition of the social function of property. All this, among other things, is made explicit and developed in the framework of the right to the city.

In a complementary manner, HABITAT III shall encourage measures and instruments that promote responsible production and consumption, avoiding distortions of the "green economy". In the new agenda that will arise, there must be tools to prevent, avoid and compensate for human rights violations related to habitat, particularly the destroyal of territories, evictions and forced displacement of populations caused by megaprojects and works of infrastructure. Finally, in HABITAT III, beyond the plan to construct resilient cities, measures must be designed to address the root causes of environmental degradation and climate change.

None of this will be possible if, in HABITAT III, civil society does not have guaranteed equal participation with respect to the other participants. This is especially important for issues such as representation and participation in national committees, access to information, and the inclusion of their concerns and proposals on national and international debates and throughout the process. The way to make sure social participation is fulfilled in Habitat III is by creating ways to facilitate appropriate and dignified conditions in the planning, as well as during and after the conference. All must have access to information and logistical support for all social proposals to reach every level during each phase of the process. It is important to consider that social participation reflects gender equity, facilitation of various age groups and the inclusion of people with disabilities and representatives of indigenous peoples, with respect of their customs.

There cannot be a new Habitat Agenda without participation of civil society. Therefore, we demand that instead of having to face opposition, lack of support and even criminalization, this international effort will include and recognize innovations by the social sector and achieved through HABITAT III. Only then will another world be possible.

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