



**DRAFT**

## **Civil Society Statement for International Housing and Land Rights Day on Preparations for the Habitat III Conference**

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. HIII's first preparatory meeting will be held in New York in September 2014.

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 to the city, the right to land and territory, as well as quality transportation and environmentally-friendly energy.

In 1976, the Habitat I Conference in Vancouver adopted a Declaration on Human Settlements. Although the Conference occurred during a period of rapid urbanization, conferees never lost sight of the rural-urban relationship. The Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996 achieved significant advances in the recognition of the right to housing in the Habitat Agenda adopted by participants,, thanks to the participation of civil society.

Despite these achievements, we cannot ignore the current accelerated process of speculative urbanization, witnessed around the world. This process often violates basic human rights and leads to irrational sprawl of cities 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 right of all people, to live in peace, dignity and safety.. without discrimination.

For our organizations, the metabolic relationship between the rural and urban cannot be ignored. The policies of recent decades have sought to weaken the rural areas and empty its population in favor of big businesses that have allowed cities to grow at the expense of rural areas... We disagree with the hegemonic model of development from which these policies are derived, which causes the seizure of the territories of indigenous peoples and peasants as well as the destruction of their habitat and sources of income. This model has also increased criminal violence that provokes mass migrations, increased poverty, and a loss of culture and community practices. All this makes life impossible for those not concentrated in the cities.

These dire consequences require that the discussions, proposals and resolutions of Habitat III focus primarily on human rights and obligations for the states. sGrassroots and civil society organizations have advanced alternative proposals that should be considered in Habitat III, such as:

- The necessary evaluation of the implementation of the Habitat II Agenda and its corresponding Global Plan of Action;
- The promotion of measures to overcome inequalities, discrimination, segregation and lack of opportunity to enjoy the habitat and good living conditions 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 territorial management, citizen control and coordination of the public sector with the planning sectors, habitat production and management, as well as the recognition of the social function of property.

These issues, among others, are 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." The emerging new agenda must provide tools to prevent, avoid and make reparations for human rights violations related to habitat, particularly dispossession, evictions and forced displacement of populations caused by megaprojects, infrastructure and other development. Finally, beyond the plan to develop resilient cities, the Habitat III process must design measures to address the root causes of environmental degradation and climate change.

None of this will be possible if the Habitat III process and implementation do not guarantee civil society does not guarantee equal participation of civil society with respect to the other actors. 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 ensure social participation in Habitat III is by creating ways to facilitate adequate and dignified conditions in the planning, as well as during and after the conference. Civil society 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 reflect gender equity, facilitation of various age groups and the inclusion of people with disabilities and representatives of indigenous peoples, with respect of their customs.

A new Habitat Agenda cannot succeed without the participation of civil society. Therefore, we urge that, instead of having to face obstruction, lack of support and even criminalization of social movements, this global Habitat Agenda effort enable the inclusion of social sector innovations. Only then will Habitat III achieve the better world we all want.

**Paragraphs about the local situation.**

6 October 2014