

Statement of Knut Unger, MieterInnenverein Witten (Witten Tenants Assoc.) on behalf of the “International Working Group for the Regulation of Real Estate Markets and Market Alternatives” to the Habitat III Plenary 20th Oct. 2016

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

our international working group was formed in reaction to the fact that Habitat III did not discuss the reasons and disastrous consequences of the financialisation of all goods which constitute our local and planetarian habitat. During the past two decades the transformation of housing, land, water, urban development, infrastructure etc. in globally traded financial assets has caused an intensification of the global crisis of housing and local livelihoods, of the ecology, of global and national economies and of democratic governance at all levels. After the housing and mortgage crashes in 2008 millions lost their homes, and we are far away from solving the causes and consequences of the crashes.

The New Urban Agenda does neither mention predatory lending and opaque mortgage securitizations, nor land grabbing, nor transnational corporations, nor the global financial industries that are going to put the economic control of our planet into the hands of the 1 %.

After all the disasters of the past decades, after all the new protest movements and - partly – also new policies at national and international this is a fundamental and scandalous mistake of Habitat III. As long as the New Urban Agenda or it's follow up does not deal with the political-economic realities which frame and determinate the problems and opportunities of spatial development and governance, as long as I does not focus on the basic question how to finance affordable housing and habitat in a globally just, sustainable and socially consoled way it will fail to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the good goals, principles and technical tools we can find in the New Urban Agenda as well.

In order to achieve the SDGS and to realize the human rights in our cities and settlements it is necessary to develop another agenda, a human rights driven agenda for the recovery of social governance over the dis-embedded real estate markets and the financial industries that determinate it.

We call on upon the global community and decision makers at all levels to:

- Translate human right obligations into concrete & enforceable rights to affordable housing, land, water, sanitation, health, food, transport, education and all other necessary local services;
- Implement effective and democratic social control of property and land use in all countries and at all scales and within non-discrimination polices;
- Build democratic & sustainable alternatives to market regimes over land and housing;
- Stop real-estate speculation, the policy dominance of private interests and authoritarian governance of our spaces and livelihoods;
- Develop new national and international mechanisms for public and socially controlled finance of affordable and decent housing for all.

We believe that it is possible to achieve the realization of the human rights for all if we dare to intervene into the markets in a competent and efficient way.

Si se puede !