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HABITAT III

ASSEMBLIES

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY SUMMARY

On Saturday October 15th over 1,000 participants representing the diversity of the stakeholders groups: grassroots women, indigenous peoples, farmer's groups, youth, academia, researchers, local government representatives, NGOs, and UN agencies attended the Women's Assembly at Habitat III. Representatives from fifty+ countries exchanged perspectives on a range of topics— including how they could work to foster synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and advocate to secure gender-responsive local development and inclusive decision-making around the world. Accomplished and determined, participants enumerated and celebrated women's expertise and contributions to framing the New Urban Agenda; and declared strategies and plans for leveraging the collective knowledge, networks, partners and power of the women's movement to insure their cities and settlements value, work for and improve the standing and quality of life of women and girls (per the 2030 policy commitments).

The morning plenary sessions featured a spectrum of policy champions, starting with commentaries by the Assembly's national hosts, Ecuadorian representatives, Rosario Charito Utreras of the Women's Committee for Habitat III and Gilda Palacios Herrera of the National Council for Gender Equality. International sponsors of the Women's Assembly followed; Maite Rodriguez, Co-chair of the Huairou Commission, gave a comprehensive review of the issues, priorities and roles locally focused gender equality and women's empowerment advocates championed in the Habitat III process. Underscoring the high level of organization the women and human settlements movement had mobilized to date, Maite had full confidence women's groups would be an even stronger force in insuring urban development advanced gender equality in all relevant elements of 2030 policy implementation. Deputy Directors of UN Habitat, Aisa Kacyira, and UN Women, Lakshmi Puri, concretized the commitment and mandate they bring to assisting member states in designing urban development initiatives that advance gender equality and transform the living conditions and economic and social opportunities of women and girls living in urban poor communities. From their distinct agencies, both speakers illustrated how successful campaigns such as Safe Cities for Women and partnerships between local governments and women's groups for settlement development could be scaled up to accelerate progress and advance NUA and SDG goals.

The second half of the morning program provided a deeper understanding of the diversity and competencies of the women's movement working for gender just and responsive urban development, starting with Ana Lucy Bengochea (co-chair of the Indigenous Peoples Partner Constituency Group) and Relinda Sosa, CONOMAVIDI, Peru who summarized the outcomes of the Grassroots Women's Academy, a 3 day pre-event in which 50 grassroots women leaders from across the Global South, hosted by Luna Creciente, an Ecuadorian network of indigenous women's groups. Noting the knowledge gained by grassroots women leaders exchanging good community development practices and strong local alliances before H3 opened, the two leaders summarized the partnership principles and voluntary commitments Academy participants agreed upon and issued in a declaration presented to Dr. Clos, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, to formalize grassroots women's groups as implementing partners, the previous day.



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This inspiring vision set the stage for an in-depth discussion, moderated by Women's Partner Constituency Group chair Katia Araujo and Teresa Boccia, outlining the leadership roles women have played to insure government commitments to inclusive development become lived reality when plans and budgets are committed. Applying occupational, ethnic, and age lenses to engendering the New Urban agenda, women leaders representing a broad range of Partner Constituency Groups: academics (Ana Falu), farmers (Mildred Crawford), indigenous people (Elisa Urbano), older persons (Kathy Kline) and youth (Amanda Segnini) offered practical and strategic plans for nurturing cities and settlements that value and plan for diverse needs and interests and incentivize and reward decision-makers who boldly invest in meeting the needs of all their citizens.

To advance our responsibilities in localizing the NUA commitments, the afternoon session of the Women's Assembly brought together more than 300 participants to collectively plan our commitments to implementation. Breakout groups were organized around 10 key thematic areas critical to improving the political, social, and economic well being of women and to ensuring gender responsive urban development:

1. Women's Political Agenda and Representation in Urban Decision-Making
2. Women's Economic Empowerment, Decent Job Agenda Unpaid Care and Domestic Work and Women in the Informal Economy
3. Cities Safe for Women: Safe Public Spaces Free from Violence
4. Promoting Grassroots Women's Leadership and Agenda in Slum and Informal Settlement Upgrading & Development
5. Recognizing & Resourcing Rural – Urban Links
6. Securing Access to and Control Over Land, Property and Housing
7. Taking Leadership on the Environment, Climate Change and Resilience
8. Designing, Planning and Monitoring Gender Responsive Cities
9. Securing Women's Lives and Opportunities in Post-Conflict Context – Including Refugees
10. Supporting Ecuadorian Women's Leadership in NUA Implementation

In these thematic breakout groups, we inventoried good practices, advocacy gains, and effective partnerships the women's movement has led, committing to sharing our tools, knowledge and experience to build the capacities of urban actors, from grassroots women to municipal and national governments, to build on the collective work and achievement in urban development and governance to support implementation. Further, the breakout groups developed collective commitments to implementing the NUA to ensure an inclusive, locally relevant New Urban Agenda is realized.



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As participants of the Women's Assembly, we:

1. Welcome the shared vision of the NUA, aligned with SDG 5, that envisages cities and human settlements that achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls;
2. Validate and will ensure the formulation of gender-responsive policies in urban planning and sector development and the ratification of women's and girls' rights in relation to infrastructure basic services, food safety and security; and
3. Recognize inclusive safe public spaces and transport increase women's mobility and social status; and
4. Acknowledge that women's work in the informal and care economy and the need for livelihood opportunities are particularly important to the world's women and girls, and as active leaders in our cities and communities we commit to ensuring that concrete actions in these areas are implemented.

Nevertheless, we are concerned that the New Urban Agenda's Means of Implementation are general and broad, and that the policy framework fails to position women, in our diversity, as partners and leaders of gender just, urban development. We reject the notion that women are one of a number of demographic groups who will be beneficiaries of government action.