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**HABITAT III**  
ASSEMBLY REPORT

<b>Title of the Assembly:</b>	Women's Assembly (WA)
<b>Date:</b>	October 15, 2016
<b>Time:</b>	9:00-18:00
<b>Venue:</b>	Agora, Casa de la Cultura
<b>Name of leading organizing Institution(s):</b>	The Huairou Commission:
<b>Country/City where leading organizing Institution(s) is/are based:</b>	Global Network with members in 50 countries (LAC/Africa/Asia/Europe, & N.America); Secretariat based in Brooklyn, NY USA
<b>Contact Person</b>	Sofjan, Sri; Women's Assembly MC and Global Planning Committee Mbr. (Asia) Schilen, Sandy; Strategic Director Huairou Commission; Sabancevaite, Anagabriele
<b>Name of organizing partnering Institution(s) with their respective base (City, Country)</b>	UN Women (New York City, USA) UN Habitat (Nairobi, Kenya)
<b>Contact Person from partnering Institution(s)</b>	Cortes, Patricia (UN Women); Mwai, Angela (UN Habitat/Gender Equality Unit)
<b>Approximate number of participants:</b>	850
<b>Number of female participants:</b>	675
<b>Number of male participants:</b>	175

**1. Summary of the Assembly reflecting the structure and format**

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 will work to foster synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) as a means of securing 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).



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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 with Maite Rodriguez, co-chair of the Huairou Commission summarizing the issues, priorities and roles locally focused advocates have championed to transform gender power relations and in turn urban development in policy implementation. 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 steady watchdogs for insuring gender just urban development is realized. Deputy Directors of UN Habitat, Aisa Kacyira, and UN Women, Lakshmi Puri, in a similar vein, concretized the commitment and mandate they bring to assisting member states in insuring urban development investments transform the living conditions and economic and social opportunities of women and girls living in urban poor communities.

The second half of the morning program featured 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 involving 50 grassroots women leaders from across the Global South, hosted by Luna Creciente, a network of indigenous Ecuadorian women's groups. Noting the knowledge gained by grassroots women leaders exchanging good community development practices at the event, the two leaders presented the partnership principles and voluntary commitments Academy participants agreed upon and presented as a declaration to Dr. Clos, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, to formalize grassroots women's groups roles as implementing partners.

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, Concepcion Laguna?), older persons (Kathy Kline) & youth (Amanda Segnini) offered practical and strategic plans for nurturing cities and settlements that value and plan for diverse needs & interests and incentivize and reward decision-makers who boldly invest in meeting the needs of all their citizens.

To advance participants' responsibilities in localizing the NUA commitments, the afternoon session of the Women's Assembly brought together more than 300 participants to collectively plan their voluntary commitments to implementation. Breakout groups, pre-planned by networks expert in the topic, including Gender STE, Huairou Commission, Metropolis, Slum Dwellers Intl., WIEGO, Women and Cities, Women and Habitat and Women and Peace 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 advances:

1. Women's Political Agenda & Roles in Urban Decision-Making
2. Women's Economic Empowerment in the Informal Economy (Decent Job Agenda for Informal and Unpaid



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Care&Domestic Workers)

3. Cities Safe for Women
4. Grassroots Women's Leadership & Policy Priorities for Developing and Formalizing Slums & Informal Settlements
5. Rural-Urban Links that Recognize & Resource Women's Contributions
6. Women's Access to & Control Over Land, Property and Housing
7. Women's Leadership in Climate Change & Community Resilience
8. Inclusive Planning, Project Design, Implementation & Monitoring in Cities
9. Women's Security & Opportunities in Post-Conflict and Refugee Situations
10. Ecuadorian Women's Leadership in NUA Implementation

Each group exchanged members' good practices, advocacy gains & effective partnerships and discussed how women-led knowledge sharing platforms could build the capacities of urban actors (grassroots women to local, national governments) to achieve 2030/NUA goals. Leading by example, groups issued voluntary commitments to leverage their organized constituencies and thematic expertise & position women as leaders of transformative development and champions of accountable policy-making. Ms. Mwaura-Muiru and Damache concluded the day by helping participants to appreciate, sharpen and consolidate the depth and insightfulness of the collective outcomes produced at the Habitat III Women's Assembly.

#### 2. Key messages from the discussions

Women's Assembly participants in the afternoon shared and shortlisted a number of ways the NUA is relevant to them, stating they:

- a. 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;
- b. 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;
- c. Recognize inclusive safe public spaces and transport increase women's mobility and social status; and
- d. Acknowledge that women's work in the informal and care economy and the need for livelihood opportunities are essential 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.

In affirming that the NUA contains policy principles and commitments that place women's empowerment and gender equality as core elements of achieving sustainable, inclusive urban development, Assembly members



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called for clear and explicit links to relevant SDGs and their means of implementation, to promote coherence and accountability. They also underscored that strong political will and resolve are required to transform existing gendered power relations and redistribute agenda setting authority and opportunities moving forward.

To accomplish this level of social change, women leaders pledged to take their own bold actions to strengthen women, their families, homes, and communities, and build healthy, thriving cities that meet the needs of all their citizens.

Break out discussions, with diverse participants and contexts, focused on specific issues and sectors, yet still produced a common political agenda. A sample of some of the messages, in the following section, illustrates the common threads:

Safe cities and safe public spaces free of violence against women and girls are increasingly recognized as preconditions for inclusive, sustainable development. To eliminate gender based violence and discrimination, the NUA calls for insuring equal access to physical & social infrastructure and basic services (para 14 b), prioritizing women's access to essential services including WATSAN (para 119) and urban mobility (para 114) as essential. Para 100 urges Member States to "support the provision of well-designed networks of safe, accessible, green and quality streets and other public spaces that are accessible to all, free from crime and violence, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence ... (and that are) fostering both formal and informal local markets and commerce, ... with the goal of improving health and well-being." Mindful NUA implementation requires sustained and informed advocacy, para 155 calls for the empowerment of women and others to participate in urban and territorial development and decision-making (echoing SDG5.5).

Gender responsive and equality efforts cannot be merely a 'box to check' in urban planning and financing. Procedures and incentive structures are needed to involve and appoint women leaders of informal settlement groups, informal workers' associations and community caregiving efforts to drive these outcomes. Monitoring processes to insure grassroots women's groups are facilitated to participate as data and information generators, expert planners and urban developers and show they can partner, produce and transfer gender responsive results are needed. Investments in such processes will show how grassroots-led gender transformation 'fuels' urban transformation and motivate cities to mainstream people-centered approaches.

Stagnated, non-inclusive urban development is fueled by entrenched gender inequality in the urban land, housing and economic sectors. Land access, ownership and control of land and housing are the foundation for women living in poverty, transforming their economic, social and political standing. The new frameworks have a responsibility and must realize targets for delivering public policies and land governance systems that result in increasing land ownership for a large percentage of women poor.

NUA Paragraph 59 commits to recognizing the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy, particularly women (including unpaid, domestic and migrant workers) to urban economies—and prioritizes enhancing their



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livelihoods, working conditions, income security and their voice and representation. Redistributing urban decision-making power is essential to achieving these goals and requires new financing schemes to transfer public and private investment from the formal to the informal sector, and from men to women.

**3. Action-oriented recommendations/ way forward in the framework of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda [key points only, including specific global, regional and local actions].** Recognizing the essential role of governments in leading implementation efforts, and as co-implementors of the New Urban Agenda, **participants of the afternoon Women's Assembly session called upon Member States to:**

- Formally recognize women's organizations, particularly grassroots women's organizations, as key stakeholders with a strong track record of delivering practical, scalable results that are critical for the effective implementation of the NUA.
- Acknowledge the economic value of women, particularly the grassroots, for their unpaid contributions to transforming their communities including through the care economy.
- Establish plans in country charters to ensure equal rights for women and men in housing and land ownership and access to housing.
- Formally assign the role of women's organizations, particularly grassroots women and informal workers, to establish indicators and participate in disaggregated data collection, using tools such as safety audits and community mapping, and through the use of technology.
- Resource the up scaling of gender responsive best practices and community solutions through targeted funds and participatory budgeting.
- Foster partnerships with women's organizations including grassroots and informal settlement groups recognizing their community expertise and capacity to manage and effectively employ resources. Partnerships with local governments that include the increased participation of women in decision-making are imperative to successful implementation and should be institutionalize with binding agreements.

To support and drive the demand for sustained and impactful member state action, participants of the Quito Women's Assembly afternoon sessions declared priorities and voluntary commitments to ensure gender equality is measurably advanced and that urban public policies and political leadership are transformed by women's focused and widespread participation. Collectively, and across our unique contexts and areas of expertise, Women's Assembly participants agreed to working together on the following cross-cutting objectives which are to:

- Foster Women-Led Generation of Disaggregated Data & Information ,
- Center Stage the Leadership of Grassroots Women's Organizations in Upgrading Informal Settlements and Protecting and Improving Informal Sector Livelihoods,
- Promote Gender Responsive Urban Development (by transferring the effective tools, practices and gender responsive public policies the women's movement have led),



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- Mobilize Constituencies and Partnerships to Accelerate Progress for Gender Equality and Inclusive Urbanization, and
- Engender and Expand Women's Leadership in Governance and Public Decision Making

#### 4. Key commitments (if any) within the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Furthermore, participants (representing thematic networks, social movements, mutual self-help community, faith based and professional associations, research and policy agencies, NGOs and other organizational structures) pledged to undertake actions, relevant to our situations and contexts, that include a subset of the following:

- Developing and making available to all cities knowledge, tools and lessons from successful practices as part of promoting comprehensive rights-based approaches, that recognize women and girls as change agents in order to support governments to develop gender transformative, inclusive safe cities for women and girls,
- Establishing women's platforms and networks to exchange best practices on resilience building in conflict and post conflict situations between women's groups as a means of transferring of knowledge, building on good grassroots practices and creative problem-solving,
- Continuing to promote holistic sustainable, resilient development through an integrated approach linking the conservation of natural resources, disaster and climate resilience to building sustainable livelihoods for urban and rural communities, based on women's (indigenous, grassroots, professionals) local knowledge and practices,
- Sustaining advocacy and vigilantly monitoring laws and policies intended to promote inclusive, gender responsive land governance and women's empowerment in poor communities as a means to measurably secure and protect women, their homes and livelihoods,
- Monitoring taxes and levies that are collected to facilitate rural-urban links and ensure women's needs are met through tax collection and allocation, and
- Advising governments on policies and programs to ensure gender responsiveness through community led processes and financing gender-aware research programs that expand evidence and knowledge relevant to inclusive and equitable urban governance.

#### 5. Way forward and next steps on monitoring the implementation of the outcomes and the commitments from the Assembly.

#### 6. Proposed partnerships, network and synergies with other stakeholders and constituency groups within the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, emerging from the Assembly.

The communication section below captures some of the ways forward, next steps and partnership efforts emerging from the Habitat III process. The 'road to Quito' featured sustained and impactful organizing and advocacy by dozens of women-led networks operating locally to globally who worked to mold the New Urban Agenda so that it would contest gender inequalities in cities and settlements and transform the rights, standing and living conditions of women and girls. Implementation and monitoring processes will build on these constituencies and active



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networking platforms and take up Assembly commitments as appropriate. Participant feedback and messaging after the afternoon breakout sessions of the Women's Assembly indicates that it inspired participants to: see the diversity of practice and perspectives in the ten fields of thematic work, learn from peers and allied networks and to realize the capacity and broader importance of women's leadership to drive transformative urban development in the years ahead.

Commitments to work closely and partner with local authorities and establish women's contributions to effective, decentralized urban development were abundant. Social movement networks of the urban poor similarly reaffirmed their commitment to continuing their coalition work as a means of establishing an evidence, resource and partnership base that can demonstrate that organizations of the urban poor, where women lead (or co-lead) must be the ones demonstrating and demanding transformative urban development.

#### **7. Outreach and communication strategy to take forward recommendations and commitments for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda.**

An impressive number and range of networks and organizations (grassroots informal settlement, workers groups, community caregivers, savings and credit cooperatives, farmers and indigenous people's organizations; (I)+NGOs, journalists, professional urbanists—researchers, planners, architects, policy and sector specialists--government officials, networks supporting them and development aid and donor representatives) participated in the Women's Assembly. From the Global South and North, a majority of participants were representing longstanding work on women's empowerment and gender responsive urban development that is ongoing for them. Hence many participants discussed how they will go home and share the information and experiences from Habitat III and also help focus their networks, community support, service and education centers, university, research, technical, or policy groups on understanding and strategizing how to best position their groups in NUA and SDG implementation and monitoring at this stage. Since a majority of these groups have strong communication capacities (social media, websites, newsletters, videoing, etc.), people will use them to share information, impressions and plans with colleagues, people of influence and the general public in the weeks ahead. Communication systems (list serves etc.) and social networks established through the World Urban Campaign and the General Assembly of Partners will also support women's groups to continue forward moving organizing and advocacy. Networks like Huairou Commission, SDI, UCLG, WIEGO who network and cooperate with one another on these issues will work from now through to the Governing Council meeting in April 2017 to remind member states and other key actors of the roles they have to play in measurably advancing gender just urban development and women's public leadership in designing and transforming settlements and cities that will work for them.

#### **8. Any other relevant comments or outcome from the session not covered above.**

The daily Women's Caucus, several networking and side events, civil society presentations to member states, meetings with UN Habitat senior leadership (via AGGI etc.) and the Women's Roundtable provided opportunities to continue messaging the outcomes and networking of the Women's Assembly