



STATEMENT LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONSTITUENCY, CIVIL SOCIETY HEARINGS

Delivered by Emilia Saiz on behalf of UCLG and the Global Taskforce
during the Habitat III Informal Hearings with Stakeholders
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An organized constituency, ready to contribute

Allow me to start by once again thanking the Habitat III Bureau, the Secretariat and the Member States for having made this process inclusive and participatory. We think it is fair to say that the process towards a New Urban Agenda has, up to now, guaranteed a strong role for all actors, including local governments.

Allow me also to take a moment to commend the efforts of all the constituency groups in organizing around the Global Assembly of Partners, and to celebrate the commitment of local and regional government networks in responding to the call to contribute to the New Urban Agenda. Many of you might recall the significant delegation of Mayors and Governors that were here just a few weeks ago. Mayors from Bogotá to Johannesburg, Barcelona and Jakarta came here to address you, conscious that this agenda is relevant both for development and for their daily work.

Zero Draft

As expressed by Mayors around the world then, we commend the work done in the Zero Draft, and particularly welcome the references to **decentralization, subsidiarity and local governance**. We are convinced that without these notions sustainable development would be impossible.

We cannot repeat enough that the Habitat II Conference, 20 years ago, was ahead of its time in acknowledging local authorities as “main partners”, as well as in its recognition of the transformative potential of decentralization. We very much welcome how the Zero Draft has **recovered this spirit** and would like to make proposals to go even further.

It is important to promote the strategic **territorial approach as the backbone of** national urban policies as well as enhanced metropolitan governance. We would like to emphasize the need to expand on the urban-rural continuum in the New Urban Agenda.

We welcome the commitment to achieve “**cities for all**”, as well as the reference to the concept of the “**Right to the City**”. However, we hope that this element will be further expanded in the action part of the document. Overall, the renewal of the new social contract with citizens and the notion of co-creating could be developed further in the text, including by deepening the principle of local democracy. There should also be a clearer commitment to the universal provision of public services and the protection of the commons.

We were also pleased to see the text recognize the need to link the New Urban Agenda with the SDGs. However, we want to emphasize that, in our view, the New Urban Agenda goes beyond the SDGs; it can in fact be the enabling framework for the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. It represents a historic chance to harness the positive effects of urbanization.

One of our major concerns is the **financing** of urbanization and territorial development. There is a need to address the mismatch between the boundaries of local governments’ jurisdictions on one hand and economic development and residential maps on the other. Incentives should be put in place, through fiscal measures and legal frameworks, to define more cohesive territories, especially with relation to metropolitan areas.

A seat at the global table

In an urbanizing world, now, more than ever, we need an **enhanced partnership** between local governments (big and small) and the international community, characterized by inclusive consultations and decision-making processes.

The international community must **listen to cities and territories**, not only as mere implementers; it must harness their experiences.

This is why we are convinced that we need to define new mechanisms to improve dialogue between Member States and local and regional authorities at global level.

We hope that the draft’s call for the strong involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda will be reflected in a specific seat for us at the policy-making table. The initial ideas in the Zero Draft on this question are very welcome, but need developing.

We need **local and sub-national authorities to be recognized as a sphere of government**. This would allow us to play our full role as active partners in the implementation and follow-up of the agenda.

We also call for a sound follow-up and monitoring process after Habitat III. This should include an effort to improve urban data collection, building on the existing initiatives of local and regional governments, their associations and UN Agencies.

Please count on us to continue developing dialogue with national governments and civil society to ensure a truly inclusive agenda.

Thank you.