

## Habitat III issue paper – Comments from the International Music Council

### Introduction

The International Music Council (IMC) would firstly like to acknowledge the collective work of all contributors to the Habitat III Issue Paper (UNESCO, UN DESA, UN-Habitat and OHCHR). We applaud the efforts made to tackle the urban issue from a comprehensive point of view and for including the cultural aspects of this complex topic. The inclusion of the cultural dimension is not only essential to fully understand the issue at hand; but also to see what measures must now be taken and what concepts States might bear in mind when defining the Urban Agenda in 2016, in order for change to truly take place.

IMC supports the comments made by the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments on the issue paper. Recognising the importance of culture in this cross-cutting issue is the first step – of many – in the right direction. Concrete measures must necessarily follow.

### Observations and suggestions

1. The concept of “re-humanizing cities” is incredibly important and rightly pointed out as so in the issue paper: “should be a strategic objective of the New Urban Agenda”  
The urban issue goes beyond its physical, tangible aspect. Cultural environments (museums, concert halls...) are not solely made up of brick walls, but also of human beings which is why the “human” dimension must be taken in account. The urban issue is part of a wider spectrum which includes culture, education, health and development; these issues must be dealt with as a whole, and not separately.
2. Cultural impact assessment should be integrated into national and local urban development plans  
This second point goes hand in hand with the previous one. Urban development plans must take into account their cultural impact which implies an upstream assessment: instead of building + assessing, we have to assess and then build. The cultural impact must be one of the governing concepts when developing local and national urban plans.
3. More urban land should be allocated to public open spaces and public sheltered facilities  
Allocating more and specific urban areas to public spaces and facilities would be the first step towards cultural democratisation. In order to broaden cultural access, there first needs to be cultural spaces to access. Making sure specific areas are devoted to public spaces would be the prerequisite for those areas to be converted into cultural spaces per se.

4. Urban space is where formal and non-formal artistic and cultural education is provided and the place where cultural expressions meet their audience: the New Urban Agenda should therefore ensure that urban spaces reflect cultural diversity.
  
5. Although the issue paper does mention documents regarding the Post-2015 Development agenda (the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals) and the importance of culture, the document's vision of culture itself is restrictive: limited to the heritage dimension (see goal 11.4 of the [Open Working Group proposal](#)).  
The issue paper should argue for a broader vision of culture in Post-2015 documents, including aspects such as creativity, diversity and cultural participation. That broad vision of culture should also be taken into account when defining the New Urban Agenda. The documents produced within [The future we want includes culture](#) initiative (culture as a [goal](#) and [indicators](#)) should be taken into consideration when trying to define "culture" and would help understand what the concept of culture truly means and the various areas it covers.
  
6. Though States are the key actors in the defining of the urban agenda, the role of members of the civil society must not be underestimated. In order for the urban agenda to be efficient and produce concrete results, collaboration with civil society must be encouraged and favoured.