**THE NEW URBAN AGENDA: TOWARDS CITIES THAT ARE MORE INCLUSIVE, EQUAL, AND RESILIENT FOR ALL**

For the Association of Corporate and Family Foundations – AFE Colombia-, an entity that currently gathers 64 of the best known and committed family and corporate foundations in Colombia, it is a priority to participate in defining the New Urban Agenda. We received with keen interest the invitation from the United Nations to take part in the Assembly of Partners –GAP-.

At AFE, we are aware that humanity faces challenges of high magnitude and complexity. This encourages the design, effective implementation, and the measuring and monitoring of commitments made to transform the agenda of urban centres. Climate change, the migration of people from rural to urban areas, internal displacement, the expansion of urban centers, inequality, poverty and extreme poverty, the lack of integrated habitats, are just some of the challenges involved in the development agenda.

Looking ahead towards the Third Conference of the United Nations on housing and sustainable urban development -Habitat III- and within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals –SDGs-, especially SDG 11, AFE recognizes the importance of urban development with a territorial focus and strengthening communities to improve peoples’ welfare and thus achieve adequate living conditions in cities and human settlements so that they are inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

To influence in the New Urban Agenda, we are convinced that a committed effort is required from all sectors of society, as well as the need to promote and facilitate the effective exercise of human rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights that should be at the center of the New Urban Agenda.

With the knowledge and experience of working with and for communities, AFE Foundations reiterate that is it possible to achieve better cities when national and local governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, foundations, philanthropists and other interested parties promote coalitions and coordinated interventions through ways that have collective impact.

AFE and its foundations recognise that collective action allows better coordination to arise. It also creates impact and an integral vision towards solving problems in order to generate social and sustainable transformation over the medium and long term. As such it is for this reason, based on our experience and working together, that we can create conditions to consolidate cities as drivers of growth and development, providing spaces and mechanisms that promote the construction of integrated and sustainable communities. For AFE, such processes, along with requiring leadership at the local government level, should also have guidelines and the active participation of national governments to ensure the transformation of areas of land, incorporating social, economic and environmental aspects in ways that are clear and measurable.

The dialogue in urban areas can be supported by Foundations because of the independence, flexibility, management capacity and long-term vision they have, and their ability to connect different actors and agendas in the pursuit of inter-sectoral and cross-cutting interventions. This allows a commitment towards a new Habitat to be understood based on recognising areas of land and respect towards communities and individuals.

Foundations can innovate, take risks, and through collective commitments, they can develop models of intervention that can be applied and shared especially with governments, to improve and expand the impact of public policy on Habitat. Part of our proposal is to inspire and facilitate processes that transform lives and ones that can become guidelines for public policy that encourages in others the need to build better places for everyone.

Currently, AFE Foundations that facilitate processes involved in building inclusive, integrated and sustainable communities, believe that homes need to come with integral urban development that allow, along with quality designs that promote the market value of a home, to include recreational spaces, green areas, communal service areas, access to transport, shops, health, education, and in general spaces that give new meaning for citizens and a community, as well as strategies that strengthen income generation for the most vulnerable families. This among other aspects, and in addition to all of the above, needs to come with community links and participation and an active dialogue with communities, who need to participate and play a key role in the construction of a sustainable agenda in terms of Habitat.

For AFE and its associated Foundations it is imperative that the New Urban Agenda takes into account the following points:

● Urban centers need initiatives to be developed that are linked with particular areas of land and their communities, based on their reality and an understanding of their needs and legitimate interests. Communities need to be put at the heart of the debate, which is key to ensure the success of any strategy to do with sustainable urban development.

● Building and strengthening the social fabric is fundamental in the concept of Habitat. The notion of urbanism, social infrastructure and social support need to be in the New Urban Agenda in order to build cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient as the Development Agenda – ODS 11 – demands.

● The New Urban Agenda presents a historic moment to strengthen systems found in cities and in urban metropolitan areas, supported by commitments made by national and local governments to work as a network and to share knowledge that can be put into practice. Implementing ways that have collective impact that are multi-sectoral and have innovative intervention strategies should be the way forward to achieve real transformation.

● The New Urban Agenda means re-defining the concept of Habitat, its links with urbanism and housing, while equipping and developing social infrastructure and strengthening communities as part of a unique group of people who are given equal consideration. Communities need to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives and their decisions need to be taken into account.

● It is necessary to promote a paradigm shift that has at its core human beings, and one that integrates different aspects, like jobs with decent conditions, inclusive and urban economies, as well as recognising and developing small and medium-sized businesses.

● Integrating diverse populations, especially the most vulnerable, like young children, women, LGBTI people, those working in the informal sector, elder people, and people with disabilities, they all must be linked to the Habitat processes and actively participate in it, based on a community and differential focus. This requires not only affordable and decent housing but also conditions so that people can enjoy their surroundings and open spaces, which allows services and public amenities to be integrated effectively so that their fundamental rights, development, mobility and productivity are respected.

● A New Urban Agenda needs to have strong institutions in order for them to be able to carry out the integral management of areas of land, which contributes to identifying the necessary capital needed to finance this. This is based on solid institutions, mechanisms and an architecture that allow innovative participation so that resources supported by local, national and multilateral governments can reach beneficiaries. It is necessary that resources are invested thinking about impact over the long term, with clear and transparent mechanisms, which generate confidence and promote capital coming in with high rates of return in terms of sustainable impact.

● The New Urban Agenda needs to have favorable conditions so that the financial sector makes commitments. This is based on developing or strengthening an institutional financial infrastructure that is transparent and is designed over the long term, and one that is supported by governments so that risks are minimized and that the Agenda is brought closer to the beneficiaries.

● The New Urban Agenda needs to ensure the creation of integrated urban environments that are accessible for all people. This needs to be developed in an eco-friendly way, integrating health and education services, job opportunities, recreational spaces, sport and culture to include all people, in particular, elder people and people with disabilities, where huge gaps in access to services for these people exist.

● The New Urban Agenda needs a structure that recognises civil society as a catalyst of citizen demands, who need to create links and virtuous cycles of interaction in the cities in which they live in that result in promoting everyone’s welfare. Appropriate mechanisms need to be established to communicate and raise awareness among communities to ensure they can participate, and that governance can emerge, incorporating cultural values.

Briefly:

1. A new urban agenda prompts a rethinking of the notion of Habitat, one that is inclusive and accessible, linked to housing, social infrastructure and strengthening the community as part of a group of issues that need to be addressed in an integral way.

2. Land must be used as a driver of development for environmental, social and economic purposes, and as an instrument to achieve sustainable development in a community.

3. A collective commitment between the public sector – at the national and regional level – private and civil society sectors and effective joint coordination through the structuring and implementation of mechanisms towards collective impact are all critical to providing social services, and as such to achieve more inclusive and equal communities.

4. Habitat initiatives should be developed in conjunction with specific areas of land and their communities, according to their realities and an understanding of their unique needs and interests. Communities and individuals should be at the center of discussions, decisions and actions.

5. Local governments need to work in a coordinated way with national governments to guarantee the transformation of inclusive areas, incorporating social, economic and environmental aspects.

6. Foundations have experience, are independent, have a long-term vision, flexibility and they work with different actors, which makes them excellent partners with which to achieve the New Urban Agenda objectives.

7. Foundations can innovate, take risks and pilot their models to respond directly to problems and they can share with third parties, in particular with governments, to build and improve public policy on habitat.

8. As well as incorporating the SDGs into their work, Foundations share the vision of building a better future to guarantee that no one is left behind and that development can create benefits for all Colombians.

9. The relative value of land, in addition to other parts, must be for and by communities, and the value of land needs to be above speculation market prices.

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