

CITIES FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING

Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City

New York, 16th July 2018

#citiesforhousing

Building on the milestones of the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III (Quito, 2016) and the momentum of “The Shift”, a global initiative on the right to housing, the signatory cities below take part in this High-Level Political Forum of the United Nations to follow up on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” by 2030), with the support of UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing.

We, the local governments, are the public officials who are most sensitive to the everyday needs of our citizens. In the contemporary world, lack of national and state funding, market deregulation, growing power of global corporations, and increasing competition for scarce real estate often become a burden on our neighbourhoods, causing serious distortions in their social fabric, and putting the goal of ensuring equitable, inclusive, and just cities at risk. We, the local governments strongly believe that all people should have actual access to “adequate housing”, understood by the United Nations as the one that has the correct “affordability”, “legal security of tenure”, “habitability”, “availability of services, materials, facilities an infrastructure” “accessibility”, “location” and “cultural adequacy”. Nevertheless, real estate speculation, high cost housing, inadequate regulation, socio-spatial segregation, insecurity of tenure, substandard housing, homelessness, urban sprawl or informal urban enlargements without requisite facilities or infrastructure, are growing phenomena that threaten the equity and sustainability of our cities. Given this situation, local governments cannot stay on the sidelines, and need to take a central role. For all these reasons, we call for the following actions.

01

More powers to better regulate the real estate market

We demand more legal and fiscal powers to regulate the real estate market in order to fight against speculation and guarantee the social function of the city.

We, the local governments require regulatory and enforcement tools to protect our neighbourhoods from speculation. Furthermore, we need the tools to protect the use of housing as homes for people living in the cities we represent. We also require instruments to regulate the housing rental market, protecting tenants from speculative bubbles and giving them the right to greater security of tenure. Likewise, we demand mechanisms to implement value capture from real estate operations for the common good, both in new developments and in urban renewal. Finally, we need powers to fight substandard or vacant housing.

02

More funds to improve our public housing stocks

We demand more resources and commit increased investment to strengthen the public housing rental stock in all of our neighbourhoods.

We, the local governments demand more resources and investment to strengthen our public housing stock. We must promote unique solutions that respond proportionally to the seriousness of the housing emergency and promote innovative, fairer, sustainable, more agile and economically efficient alternatives. Public housing should contribute to achieving cities where all persons have equal access to affordable housing. This should include its use, alongside adequately-funded public services and welfare systems, to prevent homelessness and to ensure no one needs to sleep rough. Furthermore, we must guarantee a balanced distribution of affordable housing in the city, in order to promote fair housing, combat socio-spatial segregation, and alleviate the tension between centres and peripheries.

03

More tools to co-produce public-private communitydriven alternative housing

We are committed to boosting mixed residential solutions, which are neither solely government-driven nor purely based on commercial gain.

We, the local governments need to be able to count on the strength and talent from our cities' productive and social fabric to co-produce mixed solutions, instead of exclusively focusing on public or business-led schemes. We must prioritize subsidies and tax exemptions for the creation of affordable housing. In addition, we aim to explore, amongst others, various options adapted to each city's situation such as the cooperative or the community land trust housing models and create public-private operators to invest capital in the creation and preservation of affordable rental housing. Likewise, we must collaborate with non-governmental organisations and foster the participation, self-management and empowerment of residents, supporting good practices such as collaborative design or assisted self-construction.

04

Urban planning that combines adequate housing with quality, inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods

We are committed to planning mixed, compact and polycentric cities where housing benefits from a balanced context and contributes to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the urban fabric.

We, the local governments must promote the compactness of urban fabrics to combat urban sprawl. We need urban planning practices that avoid the dependence on the private vehicle and return to the model of accessible, walkable and bikable cities that are provided with efficient public transport networks. We must boost existing urban fabrics and promote mixed uses in all of our neighbourhoods. We must promote fair housing and integrated neighbourhoods. We should also provide alternatives to the expansion of new informal settlements by focusing on the causes that lead to them and not on their victims.

05

Municipalist cooperation in residential strategies

We want to enhance cooperation and solidarity within city networks that defend affordable housing and equitable, just, and inclusive cities by boosting long-term strategies on a metropolitan scale.

We, the local governments are committed towards cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and practice in urban and residential policies. We also propose joining forces to call for more resources and powers from both national and international supra-municipal bodies. We need the principle of subsidiarity to be applied to housing and urban policies of city and central governments. Furthermore, we call upon the cities to form a joint front when negotiating with global actors or digital platforms. In addition, we commit ourselves towards practising metropolitan solidarity so as to overcome competitive localisms, centre-peripheral tensions and territorial imbalances. Finally, we commit ourselves to reaching city agreements that transcend governmental terms of office and guarantee the coherence and continuity of long-term strategies.

Endorsed cities

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