



STATEMENT LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONSTITUENCY, CIVIL SOCIETY HEARINGS

Delivered by Emilia Saiz on behalf of UCLG and the Global Taskforce
during the Intergovernmental Negotiations for Habitat III,
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Every now and then a group of people are given the opportunity to leave a legacy.

A moment, when something can be built to last; something that can renew the foundations of our society. We all, and you in particular honorable delegates, are in that position.

The outcome document of Habitat III can be determining our cities and the relation between cities and their surroundings for the next 20 years. It has the potential to provide the bases for the world we want.

This, honorable colleagues, dear friends cannot be done with agreed language only and with the structures that we know today.

Local and sub-national authorities, as well as the civil society partners, stakeholders and the communities we represent, consider that there are four core areas to take into account if a transformative agenda is to be possible; an agenda that will make us ready for whatever the future and our rapidly changing world might bring.

1. **The new urban governance needs to be geared towards combating inequality and promoting socio-economic inclusion** ensuring access to basic services, decent housing and allowing every inhabitant, regardless of their status, to participate in decision making and be integrated through productive, decent opportunities. This new urban governance must protect common public goods and ensure the fair distribution of material, social, political and cultural resources. These are the building blocks of a renewed social contract that will allow our cities and territories to be co-created and seen as a shared responsibility of all.
2. **Territorial and cohesion policies as well as solidarity** and enhanced metropolitan governance should be the backbone of national urban policies that also support intermediary cities to ensure a balanced urban development. We must foster a rural-urban continuum that addresses food security, urban and territorial planning,

economic development, climate change and environmental sustainability, promoting mobility policies and connections that ensure territorial development while preserving cultural heritage.

3. **The enhancement of the capacities and empowerment of all actors should be the guiding principle of the Habitat Agenda.** This is what will make it actionable. Local Authorities, but also civil society, in particular women, young people, the elderly, migrants, the displaced and indigenous communities need to be empowered. Appropriate legal frameworks need to be developed to ensure that decisions are taken at the sphere closest to the group they affect. The principle of subsidiarity is broadly acknowledged in the International Guidelines on Decentralization that have been adopted by the Governing Council of UN Habitat. Renewed financial policies that enhance local taxation, ensure adequate fiscal transfers and access to responsible borrowing will be instrumental for healthy territories in the future. National and international frameworks should support the efforts of local governments to be inclusive, transparent and accountable. Enabling conditions need to be created to ensure that local government professionals are adequately trained, considered and rewarded to guarantee accountable and well-performing institutions.
4. We need to create an appropriate space for **enhanced partnerships** between local governments (big and small) and national governments, civil society and the international community. These should be characterized by inclusive consultations and decision-making processes. The international community must not see cities and territories as mere implementers; it must harness their experiences and roles. There is currently no single mechanism that answers this challenge. This is why we are convinced the Habitat III outcome document needs to provide a good framework for governments at national level to define domestic multi-level mechanisms according to their circumstances. It should also agree on new mechanisms to enhance decision making at global level which recognize local government as distinct stakeholder.

It would be a missed opportunity not to address these issues in a bold and universal manner, sharing responsibilities and rights. Please count on our constituency as an ally both at national and global level to foster transformation towards fairer, equalitarian, inclusive and sustainable development for all. We believe the Habitat III agenda is critical to creating the conditions that will allow us to achieve international agendas already agreed, in particular the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, given that most of the SDGs and climate change targets require implementation at sub-national and in particular city level.

Finally, let me affirm that local authorities align to all comments made by the constituencies represented in the Global Assembly of Partners.