



HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Habitat International Coalition

The Habitat Agenda Commitments on Safety and Security

This paper reviews the **specific principles and commitments** that States adopted in the Habitat Agenda¹ at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul in 1996, to assist in their reconsideration before adoption of the new Agenda at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III), to be held in Quito in October 2016.

For the Habitat III process and outcomes to be credible, it is indispensable to assess implementation of the commitments of Habitat II, as promised in Habitat Agenda “G. Assessing Progress.” In essence, the Habitat II achievements were: (1) an affirmation of the centrality of human rights, in particular the progressive realization of the human right to adequate housing (as provided in international instruments) in human settlements and (2) recognition of the principles of good governance in balanced rural and urban development. Those two pillars of the Habitat II Agenda are reflected in the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat II Agenda.

The commitments related to safety and security are to be understood within the concept of human habitat, a concept the two relevant bi-decennial global policies established, first at Vancouver in 1976 (Habitat I) and, secondly, at Istanbul (Habitat II) in 1996. The concept of habitat is both urban and rural, involving a “regional and cross-sectoral approach to human settlements planning, which places emphasis on rural/urban linkages and treats villages and cities as two ends [points] of a human settlements continuum in a common ecosystem” (H2, para. 104).

At Habitat II (1996), states, including their various spheres of government, committed to principles and actions over the ensuing 20 years. Concerning safety and security, the Habitat Agenda recognizes in the preamble that:

“(T)he international community, in convening Habitat II, has decided that a concerted global approach could greatly enhance progress towards achieving these goals. Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries, environmental degradation, demographic changes, widespread and persistent poverty, and social and economic inequality can have local, cross-national and global impacts. The sooner communities, local governments and partnerships among the public, private and community sectors join efforts to create comprehensive, bold and innovative strategies for shelter and human settlements, the better the prospects will be for the safety, health and well-being of people and the brighter the outlook for solutions to global environment and social problems.”; (H2:5)

“More people than ever are living in absolute poverty and without adequate shelter. Inadequate shelter and homelessness are growing plights in many countries, threatening standards of health, security and even life itself. Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”; (H2:11)

and “Appropriate efforts and technologies for rural development can help to reduce, inter alia, imbalances, unsustainable practices, poverty, isolation, environmental pollution and insecure land tenure. Such efforts can contribute to improving the linkage of rural settlements with the

¹ United Nations , Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul (Turkey) 3-14 June 1996, Consulted on March 2016 [on line]: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G96/025/00/PDF/G9602500.pdf?OpenElement>

mainstream of economic, social and cultural life, to assuring sustainable communities and safe environments, and to reducing pressures on urban growth.”; (H2:9)

The Habitat II principles, commitments and action strategies concerning **safety and security** are reproduced in the following sections. As mentioned above, these form criteria for the indispensable evaluation of Habitat II’s implementation by governments and development agencies, in particular, UN-Habitat. These reminders serve further as the minimum elements upon which to build a new Habitat Agenda, which we expect to address the new challenges facing human settlements in the 21st Century, with States and development actors committing to more-progressive development and far more-diligent implementation.

The document provides as well a list of the relevant obligations for safety and security that States have assumed in the Habitat agenda and the intervening period since Habitat II, jointly with other relevant documents forming part of the current minimum norms for human settlements development, administration and governance taking into account safety and security.

Habitat II Goals and Principles

Build together a world where everyone can live in a safe home with the promise of a decent life of dignity, good health, safety, happiness and hope; (ID:15)

Promote healthy living environments, especially through the provision of adequate quantities of safe water and effective management of waste; (ID:10)

Civil, ethnic and religious strife, violations of human rights, alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation, economic imbalances, poverty, organized crime, terrorism in all its forms, and corruption are destructive to human settlements and should therefore be denounced and discouraged by all States, which should cooperate to achieve the elimination of such practices and all unilateral measures impeding social and economic development. At the national level we will reinforce peace by promoting tolerance, non-violence and respect for diversity and by settling disputes by peaceful means. At the local level, the prevention of crime and the promotion of sustainable communities are essential to the attainment of safe and secure societies. Crime prevention through social development is one crucial key to these goals. At the international level, we will promote international peace and security and make and support all efforts to settle international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations; (H2:25)

People's need for community and their aspirations for more liveable neighbourhoods and settlements should guide the process of design, management and maintenance of human settlements. Objectives of this endeavour include protecting public health, providing for safety and security, education and social integration, promoting equality and respect for diversity and cultural identities, increased accessibility for persons with disabilities, and preservation of historic, spiritual, religious and culturally significant buildings and districts, respecting local landscapes and treating the local environment with respect and care; (H2:30)

Governments at all appropriate levels, including local authorities, have a responsibility to ensure access to education and to protect their population's health, safety and general welfare; (H2:32)

Sustainable human settlements depend on the interactive development of policies and concrete actions to provide access to food and nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation, and universal access to the widest range of primary health-care services, consistent with the report of the International Conference on Population and Development; to eradicate major diseases that take a heavy toll of human lives, particularly childhood diseases; to create safe places to work and live; and to protect the environment; (H2: 36)

Habitat II Commitments and actions

Adequate livelihood

Improve living and working conditions on an equitable and sustainable basis, so that everyone will have adequate shelter that is healthy, safe, secure, accessible and affordable and that includes basic services, facilities and amenities, and will enjoy freedom from discrimination in housing and legal security of tenure; (39), especially for people living in poverty, women and those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; (40c)

Provide all people, in particular those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, with equal opportunities for a healthy, safe and productive life in harmony with nature and their cultural heritage and spiritual and cultural values, and which ensures economic and social development and environmental protection; (42)

Support progress and security for people and communities, whereby every member of society is enabled to satisfy his or her basic human needs and to realize his or her personal dignity, safety, creativity and life aspirations; (45d)

To safeguard the health, safety, welfare and improved living environment of all people and to provide adequate and affordable basic infrastructure and services, Governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, should promote: supply of and access to adequate quantities of safe drinking water; Adequate sanitation and environmentally sound waste management; Adequate mobility through access to affordable and physically accessible public transport and other communications facilities; The provision of social services, especially for underserved groups and communities; A high level of safety and public security; The use of a variety of planning mechanisms that provide for meaningful participation to reduce the negative impacts on biological resources, such as prime agricultural land and forests, that may arise from human settlements activities; Planning and implementation systems that integrate all of the above factors into the design and operation of sustainable human settlements; (85 a-c, e, i-k)

Improve and ensure access by those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to shelter, finance, infrastructure, basic social services, safety nets and decision-making processes within national and international enabling environments; (93)

To prevent, reduce and eliminate violence and crime, Governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, in partnership with all interested parties, should: Design, create and maintain livable human settlements that encourage the use of public spaces as centres of community life so that they do not become places for criminal activity; Promote awareness and provide education in an effort to mitigate crime and violence and strengthen society; Promote crime prevention through social development by finding ways to help communities deal with underlying factors that undermine community safety and result in crime by addressing such critical problems as poverty, inequality, family stress, unemployment, absence of educational and vocational opportunities, and lack of health care, including mental health services; Encourage youth and children, in particular street children, to become interested parties in their own future and in their community's future through education, recreation, and job training and counselling that can attract private-sector investment and support from nonprofit organizations; Enhance women's safety in communities through the promotion of a gender perspective in crime prevention policies and programmes by increasing in those responsible for implementing those policies the knowledge and understanding of the causes, consequences and mechanisms of violence against women; Establish programmes designed to improve the skills of local leadership in group facilitation, conflict resolution and intervention; As appropriate, promote personal security and reduce fear by improving police services, making them more accountable to the communities they serve, and by encouraging and facilitating, whenever appropriate, the formation of lawful community based crime prevention measures and systems; Provide accessible, affordable, impartial, prompt and humane local systems of justice by, inter alia, facilitating and strengthening, where appropriate, existing traditional institutions and procedures for the resolution of disputes and conflicts; Encourage the establishment of programmes and projects based on voluntary participation, especially of children, youth and older persons, to prevent

violence, including violence in the home, and crime; Take concerted and urgent action to dismantle international and national sex trafficking networks; (123 a-j) (161d)

Develop and implement programmes to ensure universal access for women throughout their life-span to a full range of affordable health-care services, including those related to reproductive health care, which includes family planning and sexual health; (136f)

Strengthening the capacity of local authorities and civil society to review social, economic and environmental policies affecting their communities and to set local priorities and contribute to the setting of local standards for services in such areas as basic education, child care, public health, public safety, drug-abuse awareness and environmental management; (182p)

Sustainable development

Promote locally available, appropriate, affordable, safe, efficient and environmentally sound construction methods and technologies in all countries, particularly in developing countries, at the local, national, regional and subregional levels that emphasize optimal use of local human resources and encourage energy-saving methods and are protective of human health; (40f)

Provide adequate and integrated environmental infrastructure facilities in all settlements as soon as possible with a view to improving health by ensuring access for all people to sufficient, continuous and safe freshwater supplies, sanitation, drainage and waste disposal services, with a special emphasis on providing facilities to segments of the population living in poverty; (43d) (96h)

Provide, where appropriate, targeted and transparent subsidies, social services and various types of safety nets to the most vulnerable groups; (97a; 98e; 116a)

Support the economic activities of indigenous people in order to improve their conditions and development and to secure their safe interaction with larger economies; (122b)

To improve environmental conditions and reduce industrial and domestic waste and other forms of health risks in human settlements, Governments at the appropriate levels and in partnership with all interested parties should: Develop and implement national and local plans, policies and specific cross-sectoral programmes addressing all relevant chapters of Agenda 21; Develop laws and policies that specify appropriate ambient environmental quality levels and set targets for environmental improvements and identify instruments for their achievement appropriate to national and subnational priorities and conditions; Establish, equip and build capacity for monitoring and evaluating compliance with environmental regulations and effectiveness of enforcement at all levels; Set environmental standards so as to facilitate the selection and development of appropriate technologies and their appropriate use; Identify and address the disproportionately high and adverse effects of policies and programmes on the human health or the environment of people living in poverty and those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; Provide incentives and disincentives to promote the use of clean production and energy- and water-saving processes and technologies that, among other things, can increase economic opportunities in the areas of environmental technology, environmental clean-up and environmentally friendly products and can improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of human settlements for economic investments; Provide guidelines and training for the application of procedures for the assessment of environmental health impacts; Undertake environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments for development plans and projects, respectively, that may significantly affect the quality of the environment; Support mechanisms for consultations and partnerships among interested parties to prepare and implement local environmental plans and local Agenda 21 initiatives and specific cross-sectoral environmental health programmes; (137 a-i)

Introduce appropriate measures to promote the use of renewable and safe sources of energy and to improve the efficiency of energy use in human settlements, while ensuring that people living in poverty and their families are not disadvantaged; (146b)

Encourage the use of safe industrial and agricultural waste products and other types of low energy and recycled building materials in construction; (146k)

Promote and implement disincentive measures that discourage the increasing growth of private motorized traffic and reduce congestion, which is damaging environmentally, economically and socially, and to human health and safety, through pricing, traffic regulation, parking and land use planning and traffic abatement methods, and by providing or encouraging effective alternative transport methods, particularly to the most congested areas; (151d)

Strive for full-cost recovery for urban services, with the exception of public safety services, through user charges, while at the same time addressing the needs of the poor, inter alia, through pricing policies and, where appropriate, transparent subsidies; (189e)

Risk reduction and disaster response

Take appropriate action to manage the use of heavy metals, particularly lead, safely and effectively and, where possible, eliminating uncontrolled exposure; (43aa)

Provide institutional support should also in the form of industrial standards and quality control, with particular attention to energy efficiency, health, accessibility, and consumer safety and protection; (88)

With adequate attention to safety needs, reformulate and adopt building standards and by-laws, where appropriate, to promote and permit the use of low-cost building materials in housing schemes, and use such materials in public construction works; (91d)

Encourage and promote the application of low-energy, environmentally sound and safe manufacturing technologies backed by appropriate norms and effective regulatory measures; (92b)

Improve policies that reduce environmental health hazards, and provide the informal sector and all workers with accessible information on how to enhance occupational safety and reduce health risks; (118c)

Pay special attention to the quality of its design, including the scale and height, proper maintenance, regular technical inspection and safety measures in housing design; (134; 136h)

Improve shelter conditions so as to mitigate those health and safety risks, particularly risks to women, older persons, children and people with disabilities, that are associated with activities in the home; (136d)

Develop, where appropriate, criteria for maximum permitted and safe levels of noise exposure and promote noise assessment control as part of environmental health programmes; (136g)

Promote safe and healthy workplace conditions for men and women; (136l)

Protect existing forest resources and promote, where possible, afforestation around and within human settlements in order to fulfil basic needs relating to energy, construction, recreation and food security; (139b)

Promote the development and use of efficient and safe sanitary systems, such as dry toilets, for the recycling of sewage and organic components of municipal solid waste into useful products such as fertilizers and biogas; (141j)

Develop, adopt and enforce appropriate norms and by laws for land use, building and planning standards that are based on professionally established hazard and vulnerability assessments; Ensure the participation in disaster planning and management of all interested parties, including women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, in recognition of their particular vulnerability to human made and natural disasters; Encourage continued mobilization of domestic and international resources for disaster reduction activities; Promote and disseminate information on disaster resistant construction methods and technologies for buildings and public works in general; Devise programmes to facilitate, where possible,

voluntary relocation and access by all people to areas that are less disaster prone; Develop training programmes on disaster resistant construction methods for designers, contractors and builders. Some programmes should be directed particularly towards small enterprises, which build the great majority of housing and other small buildings in the developing countries; Take measures to upgrade, where necessary, the resistance of important infrastructure, lifelines and critical facilities, in particular where damage can cause secondary disasters and/or constrain emergency relief operations; (172a-g)

With respect to the mitigation of disasters, Governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, in partnership with all interested parties, should, as appropriate: Establish a comprehensive information system that identifies and assesses the risks involved in disaster-prone areas and integrate it into human settlements planning and design; Promote and support low-cost, attainable solutions and innovative approaches to addressing critical risks of vulnerable communities through, inter alia, risk-mapping and community-focused vulnerability reduction programmes; Encourage, promote and support low-cost, attainable solutions, innovative approaches and appropriate building standards to address critical risks of valuable communities, through, inter alia, risk-mapping and community-focused vulnerability reduction programmes; Introduce a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of, and communication channels among, the various key functions and actors in pre-event disaster management, mitigation and preparedness activities, such as hazard and risk assessment, monitoring, prediction, prevention, relief, resettlement and emergency response; Promote and encourage all parts of society to participate in disaster preparedness planning in such areas as water and food storage, fuel and first-aid, and in disaster prevention through activities that build a culture of safety; Strengthen and/or develop global, regional, national and local early-warning systems to alert populations to impending disasters; (174 a-f)

In order to prevent technological and industrial disasters, Governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, as appropriate, should: Pursue the objectives of preventing major technological accidents and limiting their consequences through, inter alia, land-use policies and the promotion of safe technology; Take the necessary measures to control the siting of new developments surrounding dangerous industrial activities that may be liable to increase the risk of the effects of a major accident through appropriate consultation procedures to facilitate the implementation of the policies established under subparagraph (a) above; Introduce a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and of communication channels between the various key functions of disaster preparedness and prevention, including assessment, monitoring, prediction, prevention, relief, resettlement and emergency response; Promote and encourage broad-based participation in disaster preparedness activities by giving to the population living in the vicinity of a dangerous activity adequate and regular information on the potential hazards; Strengthen and/or develop global, regional and local early-warning systems to alert populations in case of a major technological accident; (175 a-e)

International Norms related to Safety and Security

The International normative frameworks cited in the Habitat Agenda:

- United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), [Charter of the United Nations](#), (1945)*;
- UNGA, [The Universal Declaration on Human Rights](#), A/RES/3/217A, (1948)*;
- UNGA, [International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), A/res/21/2200, (1966)**;
- UNGA, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), A/res/21/2200A (1966)**;
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), [Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#), Paris, (1972)**;
- UNGA, [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), A/RES/34/180, (1979)**;
- UNGA, [International Year of Shelter for the Homeless](#), A/res/37/221, (1987)†;

- UNGA, [Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000](#), A/res/43/181, (1988)†;
- [United Nations Conference on Environment & Development](#), Rio de Janeiro (Brasil), 3–14 June 1992:
 - [Agenda 21](#)†
 - [Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#)†
 - [Statement of Forest Principles](#)†
 - [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)**
 - [United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity](#)**
- [World Conference on Human Rights](#), Vienna (Austria) 14–25 June 1993:
 - [Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action](#)†
- [World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction](#), Yokohama (Japan) 23–27 May 1994:
 - [Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World](#)†
- [Fourth World Conference on Women](#), Beijing (China), 4–15 September 1995:
 - [Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action](#)†
- [World Summit for Social Development](#), Copenhagen (Denmark), 6–12 March 1995:
 - [Copenhagen Declaration Social Development Declaration](#)†
 - [Programme of Action](#)†

Key to symbols:

* = binding on all States; ** = binding on all States party to the relevant treaty; † = declaratory law as guidance for States and their governments to comply with general principles of international law and certain treaty–law requirements.

The international normative documents developed after the adoption of Habitat Agenda or not mentioned in the Habitat Agenda²:

- UNGA, [International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction](#), A/RES/44/236, (1989) †;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 4](#) on the right to adequate housing, (1992)**;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 7](#) on the right to adequate housing: forced evictions, (1997)**;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 13](#) on the right to education, (1999)**;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 12](#) on the right to adequate food, (1999)**;
- HRC, [General Comment No. 27](#) on freedom of movement, (1999) **;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 14](#) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, (2000)**;
- UNSC, Resolution on Women and Peace and Security, [S/RES/1325](#), (2000)*;
- UNGA, [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children](#), A/RES/55/25, (2000)*;

² This is an illustrative non-exhaustive compilation of international norms.

- UNGA, [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography](#), A/RES/54/263, (2000)**;
- UNGA, [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts](#), A/RES/54/263, (2000)**;
- UNGA, [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto](#), A/Res/55/25, (2000)**;
- Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), [General Comment No. 1](#) on the aims of education, (2001)**;
- Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, [E/2001/35](#) (2001) †;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 15](#) on the right to water, (2002)**;
- [World Summit on Sustainable Development](#), Johannesburg (South Africa), 26 August–4 September 2002:
 - [Johannesburg Declaration](#)†
 - [Plan of Implementation](#)†
- High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council, [Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking](#), E/2002/68/Add.1 (2002)†;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – [First High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#), Rome (Italy), 24-25 February 2003:
 - [Rome Declaration](#)†
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - [Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#), Paris (France), 28 February-3 March 2005:
 - [Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action](#)†
- UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Hyogo (Japan), 18-22 January 2005:
 - [Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters](#)†
- ECOSOC Commission on Human Rights, Final report of the Special Rapporteur: [Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons](#), (2005) †;
- ILC, [Draft Principles on the Allocation of Loss in the Case of Transboundary Harm arising out of Hazardous Activities](#), (2006)†;
- UNGA, [Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law](#), A/RES/60/147, (2006)†;
- CRC, [General Comment N° 10](#) on Children’s rights in juvenile justice, (2007)**;
- Office of the United Nations for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Good Governance Practices for the Protection of Human Rights](#) (2007) †;
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 19](#) the right to social security, (2008)**;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – [Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#), Accra (Ghana), 2-4 September 2008:
 - [Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action](#)†
- UNSC, Resolution on Post–conflict Peacebuilding [S/RES/1645](#) and [S/RES/1947](#) (2010)*;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - [Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#) Busan (Korea), 29 November-1 December 2011:

- [Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#)[†]
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests](#), Rome, (2012)[†];
- UNGA, [The Future We Want](#), A/RES/66/288, (2012)[†];
- CEDaW, [General Recommendation No. 30](#) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post–conflict situations, (2013)**;
- Conference of Parties on Climate Change, [The Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#), FCCC/CP/2015/L.9, (2015)**;
- CFS, [Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises](#), (2015)[†];
- UN–Habitat, [International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning](#), Nairobi (2015)[†];
- UNGA, [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), A/RES/70/1, (2015)[†];
- UNGA, Resolution on the Right to Food, [S/RES/70/154](#) (2015)*;
- UNGA, Resolution on Agriculture Development, Food Security and Nutrition, [S/RES/70/223](#) (2015)*;
- UNSC, Resolution on Women and Peace and Security, [S/RES/2242](#), (2015)*;
- UNSC, Resolution on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict [S/RES/2222](#) (2015)*;
- Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai (Japan), 14 -18 March 2015:
 - [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#) [†]
- CESCR, [General Comment No. 22](#) on the right to sexual and reproductive health (2016)**;
- [World Humanitarian Summit](#), Istanbul (Turkey), 23–24 May 2016:
 - [Chair’s summary: Standing up for Humanity: Committing to Action](#)[†]

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* = binding on all States; ** = binding on all States party to the relevant treaty; † = declaratory law as guidance for States and their governments to comply with general principles of international law and certain treaty–law requirements.