



Civil Society Forum for the Africities 9 Summit
Kisumu, 17–21 May 2022

Africa's Cities and Affordable Housing

Civil society representatives meeting at Kisumu, Kenya on 15–16 May 2022 welcome the 9th Africities' theme, principles and intended outcomes stated in its concept note.¹ We also support the pledge to implement shared strategies to improve the living conditions of people at the local level, while contributing to the integration, peace and unity of Africa, starting from the grassroots,² and we encourage operationalizing the expressed choice and will to implement the 2030 and 2063 Agenda commitments.

As a priority, we citizens of Africa also urge implementation of the human rights obligations shared by all treaty-bound African states and their constituent organs, including local and regional governments and authorities across the human habitat.³ Among these shared duties is the progressive realization of the human right to adequate housing, as guaranteed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The 2030 Agenda also pledges states to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030, Target 11 states ensuring “access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.”⁴ It pledges the international cooperation of states to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere,”⁵ consistent with the 2063 Agenda determination to eradicate poverty in a single generation.⁶ That means local authorities should operate with a sense of accountability to the people who elect and mandate them.⁷ We note that the intended outcomes of Africities 9 call for “a specific program for the development and planning of intermediary cities” and “a review of planning and development methods in Africa by taking the grassroots as a starting point.”⁸

As partners in local spheres of government, we civil society representatives call for the Africities Summit to call on local authorities to integrate people-led informal planning with technical planning approaches and processes.⁹ We also note the disparity in accessing finance and call for the Africities Summit to urge local authorities to include in their policies the establishment of social-housing funds with proper financing mechanisms.

Affordable housing is scarce in Sub-Saharan Africa. Either housing programs do not exist, or housing is not affordable or inefficient in scale relative to the demand. The majority of efforts are uncoordinated, small scale, compared with demand, and often do not reach the target low-income beneficiaries.¹⁰

Further, Africities should call on local authorities and governments to promote and improve housing cooperatives by providing clear guidelines and development of various cooperatives financing communal ownership and management.

Finally, we reiterate that housing forms an indispensable part of ensuring human dignity. “Adequate housing” encompasses more than just the four walls of a room and a roof over one’s head.¹¹ Housing is essential for normal healthy living. It fulfills deep-seated psychological needs for privacy and personal space, and physical needs for health, security and protection.

Endnotes:

- ¹ General Assembly, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), A/RES/70/1, “Partnership,” <https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/7528936.26689911.html>.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ³ The Habitat II Conference defined habitat as a concept that requires “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.” The Habitat Agenda, A/Conf.165/14, Annex II, para. 104, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G96/025/00/PDF/G9602500.pdf?OpenElement>.
- ⁴ A/RES/70/1, *op. cit.*, Target 11.1.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, Goal 1.
- ⁶ “Aspiration 1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development,” Agenda 2063 stipulates that “We are determined to eradicate poverty in one generation and build shared prosperity through social and economic transformation of the continent.” African Union, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, May 2013, para. 9, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/aspirations>.
- ⁷ Africities 9, *op. cit.*, para. 7. Also, in, Member States of the African Union (AU) “Determined to promote the values and principles of democracy, good governance, human rights and the right to development; Cognisant of the mandate of the Public Service and Administration to protect the fundamental values of public service and promote an administrative culture based on respect for the rights of the user...” and guaranteed that “Public Service and Administration and its agents shall respect the human rights, dignity and integrity of all users.” African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and the Administration, Preamble and Article 4, respectively, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36386-treaty-charter_on_the_principles_of_public_service_and_administration.pdf.
- ⁸ Africities 9, *op. cit.*, para. 24.
- ⁹ At Habitat III, states committed themselves “to supporting the social production of habitat, according to national legislation and standards” and “to promoting the role of affordable and sustainable housing and housing finance, including social habitat production.” New Urban Agenda, A/RES/71/256, 25 January 2017, paras. 32 and 46, respectively, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/466/55/PDF/N1646655.pdf?OpenElement>.
- ¹⁰ Emeka Emmanuel Obioha, “Mission Unaccomplished: Impediments to Affordable Housing Drive in Addressing Homelessness in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Social Science*, Vol 10, No. 8 (2021), 310–15, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/10/8/310/html>; E. Babatunde Jaiyeoba and Abimbola O. Asojo, “A People-Centred Social Totality Approach to Low-Income Housing in the Developing World,” in Surendra N. Kulshreshtha, ed. *Sustainability Concept in Developing Countries* (London: IntechOpen, 2020), <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/71138>; El Haj M. Bah, Issa Faye and Zekebeliwai F. Geh, “The Construction Cost Conundrum in Africa,” in *Housing Market Dynamics in Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 159–214, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/978-1-137-59792-2_5.pdf; *Stocktaking of the Housing Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, Summary Report* (Washington: World Bank Group, 2015), <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Africa/Report/stocktaking-of-the-housing-sector-in-sub-saharan-africa-summary-report.pdf>; *Affordable Land and Housing in Africa* (Nairobi: UN Habitat, Volume 3, 2011), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Affordable%20Land%20and%20Housing%20in%20Africa.pdf>.
- ¹¹ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4: The right to adequate housing (art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), 13 December 1991, definition at para. 8, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fGEC%2f4759&Lang=en.

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