



HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION

**Statement of Habitat International Coalition
Before the Second Session of the First Meeting of the
Preparatory Committee for Habitat III
17 September 2014**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Michael Kane. I'm representing the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), the leading global network for housing and land rights formed by civil society in Vancouver in 1976, and today representing more than 300 social movements, nongovernmental and academic organizations on every continent, with offices in Cairo, Mexico City and Delhi. For the past few years I have represented my US based organization, the National Alliance of HUD Tenants, on the HIC Board, representing social movements, and most recently serving as HIC Vice President.

Since Habitat II, our members have witnessed an acceleration of gross violations of human rights and mass forced evictions across the globe. These have been made worse by the global financial crisis, with large banks and equity investors reshaping the cities in a different kind of image than the housing rights vision advanced at Habitat II. As a result, we see mass displacement and growing inequality in cities across the planet, from New York to Abuja, from Barcelona to Mumbai, driving people from their homes.

These urban phenomena are related to mass displacement from rural areas in countries like Colombia, where large corporations and investors are buying up land and forcing people out of their homes. There is a reason for the growing global divide that the UN's Preparatory Committee for Habitat III and the Commission on Sustainable Development have been discussing.

For Habitat III, we need to build beyond the Habitat II agenda and declarations of housing rights, to correct the retrenchment that happened at Habitat II + 5, and to embrace the Right to the City framework, to move humanity forward some additional steps in response to these crises. In particular, Habitat III should address the urgent need for enforcement and accountability by global institutions and state actors for gross violations of the Right to Housing, Land and the City.

HIC believes there should be a New Habitat Agenda, not a New Urban Agenda, one that recognizes that urbanization is not inevitable, in the form it has taken in the past 20 to 30 years, and that respects the metabolism between the physical environment and rural and urban areas, and sees the continuum of human experience in that way and manages it for peoples benefit. This New Habitat Agenda should be forged in accordance with basic principles: Development that is sustainable, inclusive, people centered, and rights-based, and that involves democratic values of justice, equality and gender equity.

In particular, Habitat III should consider and embrace strategies to regulate global financial transactions and movements; to enhance the social ownership, production and financing of housing and habitat; and to protect the commons which is under attack by the neoliberal development model.

And finally, we have a concern about the location of Habitat III. It is particularly important to select a country and a city that will be a “shining city on a hill,” one that will be a model for humanity to learn from and celebrate, that illuminates the values that we have proposed here and want to advance with Habitat III.

That means not picking a country where there are plans to displace 250 million people from the countryside into new urban high rise housing in the next 12 years—the largest displacement in human history—and where it would not be possible to have open public dialogue, allowing social movements and civil society to express their views both inside and outside the formal conference site.

At Habitat II in Istanbul, an historic, appropriate dialogue was advanced, both outside and inside the formal Conference. It resulted in major improvements in the declarations of housing rights. HIC urges the Preparatory Committee to look at Habitat III from the same perspective and select a location that exemplifies the values of sustainable development; allows a participatory dialogue both inside and outside the conference venue; and advances humanity’s Long March toward realizing the Human Right to Housing, Land and the City.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing HIC to present its perspective.