

Habitat for Humanity

Statement delivered by Jane Katz, HFHI Director of International Affairs and Programs at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

17 September 2014

[\(Video available online\)](#); remarks begin at 2:40:58)

Dr. Clos, Co-Chairs, Distinguished Delegates, Fellow Partners, I'm Jane Katz from Habitat for Humanity and we appreciate the opportunity to address this Preparatory Committee.

Habitat for Humanity's vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Habitat for Humanity is an NGO [non-governmental organization] working in over 70 countries through our national organizations, affiliates and local community partners, and we've helped over 4.5 million people in the last year improve their housing conditions by leveraging shelter as a catalyst for community transformation. In addition to our work on the ground, Habitat for Humanity supports market approaches that increase products, services and financing for affordable housing, and advocates for smart systems and policies that improve access to shelter.

Habitat for Humanity is also a proud member of the World Urban Campaign, where we represent civil society organizations and support the World Urban Campaign as a platform for consensus building and partnerships. Habitat for Humanity was privileged to help lead the Civil Society Roundtable at the World Urban Forum in Medellín and hope to continue our engagement in the future.

Cities, which are the future of humanity, face a multitude of challenges. From the persistence and prevalence of slums in the developing world to the lack of transportation and basic services, the world needs to build sustainable and prosperous cities and human settlements to be priorities on the global agenda. Recognizing this need, the World Urban Forum Declaration from Medellín calls for "the upgrading and prevention of slums, and provision of housing, basic services and land tenure security" to be included in a new urban agenda. These themes were reaffirmed by the Open Working Group for the Sustainable Development Goals which urged by 2030 to "ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums."

Habitat III offers a unique opportunity to discuss these important challenges of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed, in order to fulfill their role as drivers of sustainable development and hence shape the implementation of new global development and climate change goals.

Habitat for Humanity makes the following recommendations for the United Nations Preparatory Meetings for Habitat III:

- **Habitat III must continue to prioritize housing and basic services:** Habitat for Humanity supports the United Nations' efforts to broaden the focus of Habitat III to include sustainable cities. However, given the integral role that housing plays in sustainable cities and human settlements and the commitment during Habitat II to provide adequate shelter for all, housing must continue to be prominently featured throughout Habitat III.

- **Habitat III must prioritize security of tenure:** The MDGs created momentum on the core issue of secure land tenure and the post-2015 agenda continues that drive. Habitat III should build on that and establish secure rights to land and property as a keystone of the new urban agenda.
- **Habitat III must be informed by local communities:** What emerged from the Civil Society Roundtable was that we must incorporate the priorities, needs and experiences of citizens and communities, especially for the poor, women and other vulnerable groups. The conference provides a unique opportunity to include a variety of partners and should prioritize stakeholder engagement in the UN process.

We look forward to contributing with other stakeholders and partners in this process. Thank you.