

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

**Advancing Humanity's Long March toward
the Right to Housing, Land and the City**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Michael Kane. The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is the leading global network for housing and land rights, formed by civil society at Habitat I in Vancouver in 1976. Today, HIC represents more than 300 social movements, non-governmental 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 housing and land 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 an image different from 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 or leasing land and forcing people from their homes and sources of livelihood. These trends are causing a growing global divide that the UN's Preparatory Committee for Habitat III and the Commission on Sustainable Development cannot ignore.

For Habitat III, we need to build beyond the Habitat II agenda and declarations of housing rights, to correct the retrenchment that took place at Istanbul + 5, and to embrace the Right to the City framework, in order to move humanity forward 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 Rights to Housing, Land and the City.

HIC believes that we need a New Habitat Agenda, not merely 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. We need a New Habitat Agenda that respects the metabolism of the physical environment and rural and urban areas, and recognizes the continuum of human habitat experience in a way that manages it for people’s benefit. This New Habitat Agenda must 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 to advance at 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 an 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 to the international instruments defining the right to adequate housing.

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 free, open and participatory dialogue with civil society; and advances humanity’s Long March toward the Right to Housing, Land and the City.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing HIC to present these views.