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Stakeholder Statement

First Session of the UN-Habitat Executive Board 2020

29 June 2020

Dr Luisa Bravo, Founder and President

Excellences,
Madame Executive Director,
Distinguished delegates,
Honourable Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver a statement and contribute to the discussion of the first meeting of the UN-Habitat Executive Board this year.

I am speaking on behalf of my non-profit organization City Space Architecture based in Italy. We are partners of UN-Habitat and since 2016 we have been cooperating to develop The Journal of Public Space, the first, academic, interdisciplinary, open access journal entirely dedicated to public space. We are committed to spread the message of safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive public spaces for all, as defined in the New Urban Agenda and in the Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Public space is a key enabler of human rights, empowering women, providing opportunities for youth, creating a sense of safety, security and well-being and promoting equity, inclusion and democracy. Public space is the social glue that can contribute to advance mutual trust, cooperation and solidarity among human beings, overcoming diversity and social status.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made clear the importance of public space in everyone's life. During this unprecedented situation, all urban citizens understood that public space is the essential backbone for the functioning of cities and societies.

It is crucial, now more than ever, to take action. Public space should become a priority in the urban agenda of national authorities and local governments for the upcoming decade of action, leading to the implementation of concrete programmes that have tangible results at the local level, for social and health resilience, preventing any future devastating impact generated by the lockdown, at the urban, social and economic level.

City Space Architecture is currently promoting the online initiative '2020: A Year without Public Space under the covid-19 Pandemic' as an opportunity to develop a global approach in discussing a range of impacts derived from the pandemic, with an urgent focus on public space and how restrictions imposed by national governments, in regard of physical distancing, will affect social life in the 'new normal'.

City Space Architecture

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The initiative, engaging scholars, professionals, artists and activists, is addressing the health emergency and its consequences, and discussing future global strategies, tackling health disparity and social inequalities in support of the most vulnerable groups. The initiative is also presenting innovative approaches and creative practices to reimagine public life, and discussing about designing and planning for inclusive public spaces and resilient communities, and digital innovation to respond to unprecedented challenges. It is addressing solidarity and the right to the city through transformative actions in public space, redefining conditions for social justice and inclusion for urban well-being, thus reinforcing citizenship and the sense of community and fostering intercultural dialogues, mutual understanding, overcoming divisions, contradictions and conflicts generated by misinformation.

The initiative includes also a special issue of The Journal of Public Space that will be published by the end of July, intended to provide a narrative related to the pandemic by collecting commentaries and research findings from leading scholars.

We, public space scholars and activists, believe it is extremely important to establish conditions for an effective alliance between the public and the private sector, in the public interest, which includes also the civil society as an agent of change. We believe it is fundamental to engage every urban citizen in the sustainable development discourse, since the Global Goals belong to everyone.

We all, as human beings, together, must be committed to the imperative of leaving no one and no place behind, as included in the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2020-2023, across different pillars and domains, and in the deliverables and strategy of the work plan for 2021.

We all, as human beings, together, must invest in and contribute to reinforce public space strategies, in order to accelerate the human capital that is embedded in our cities.

Once again, thank you very much for this opportunity, I wish you a successful conclusion of the meeting.

2020: A Year without Public Space under the covid-19 Pandemic

<https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/navigationMenu/view/covid-19-program>

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