

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy – Prepared Statement

Delivered by Enrique R. Silva, Senior Research Associate, Latin America and Caribbean Program, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

16 April 2015, 11:42-11:45am

Madame Co-Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Fellow Partners, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy appreciates the opportunity to address this Preparatory Committee.

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy is the leading resource for key issues concerning the use, regulation, and taxation of land. Providing high-quality education and research, the Lincoln Institute strives to improve public dialogue and decisions about land policy. As a private operating foundation whose origins date to 1946, the Institute seeks to inform decision making through education, research, policy evaluation, demonstration projects, and the dissemination of information, policy analysis, and data. By bringing together scholars, practitioners, public officials, policy makers, journalists, and involved citizens, the Lincoln Institute integrates theory and practice and provides a nonpartisan forum for multidisciplinary perspectives on public policy concerning land internationally.

The Lincoln Institute is also a proud member of the World Urban Campaign and the General Assembly of Partners, where we represent civil society organizations, including research and academic institutions, and support the World Urban Campaign and General Assembly of Partners as a platform for consensus building and partnerships within the preparatory processes toward Habitat III and beyond.

Global urbanization and climate change require us to treat the city as a source of solutions rather than as the problem. Embracing land as a foundation for municipal fiscal health and efforts to alleviate poverty, creating good urban form and conserving land must be pursued as complementary processes. Communities and practitioners need new tools to plan within and across boundaries, over long time spans, and under conditions of uncertainty. The promotion of sustainable human settlements and the conservation of the natural environment requires work that is simultaneously organized around cities, municipal fiscal health, nature at all scales, and quality education for all residents.

To this end, the Lincoln Institute believes that Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda must address the following needs and ideas to achieve the city that we need over the next two decades:

1. The need to increase awareness of the opportunities to tap into land value increments resulting from public action as a source of finance for urban development and as a mean to facilitate the promotion of socially more inclusive land uses;
2. That a fair and well-functioning property tax can be an important tool for financing local governments and improving their ability to provide vital services to their citizens. The property tax should be embraced as an instrument of land policy as well as a means of achieving fiscal goals.
3. That urban informality and housing crises can be mitigated and forestalled through purposeful land use and fiscal policies that provide much needed physical and social infrastructure. This approach is grounded in an expansive understanding that urban informality is the result of dysfunctional urban land markets and policies, not simply a manifestation of poverty.

The Lincoln Institute also supports multilateral and collaborative efforts to promote real-time monitoring of urban expansion and the opportunities such monitoring offers to question existing land use regulations and urban policies at a global scale.

The Lincoln Institute is eager to share its expertise on land policy, urban economics, taxation and valuation and urbanization from the United States, Latin American, China and Eastern Europe to the Habitat III process and the New Urban Agenda. The Institute brings a unique perspective to debates and professional practice that seek to link land policy and land markets to broader issues of urban poverty, informal human settlements, infrastructure development and urban expansion.

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