

# **Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

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## **Oral Statement by:**

### **Kenya Civil Society Habitat III Caucus**

#### **Sub-theme 1: promoting access to adequate and sustainable housing**

Thank you,

As our written submission to the Governing Council highlights, we, the Civil Society Organization Habitat III Caucus in Kenya, welcome the *New Urban Agenda (NUA)*, which sets global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities. We take special cognizance of the fact that implementation of NUA draws on cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, urban actors at all levels of government as well as the civil society and private sector.

Our attention is further drawn to the nexus between the SDG Goal number 11, “*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*” and the NUA implementation principle of “*Leaving no one behind*”, that essentially commits all State and Non-state actors to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions by ensuring, amongst others, equal rights and opportunities, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and integration in the urban space.

Based on our local experience, we have positioned the NUA in relation to the following on goings:

- i. The proliferation of informal settlements and indignity in such settlements in Africa, and more prominently Kenya,
- ii. Devolved informal settlements; and
- iii. Legal and policy measures to promote accessible and adequate housing.

NUA aptly recognizes that growing inequality and the persistence of multiple dimensions of poverty, including the rising number of slum and informal-settlement dwellers, affecting both developed and developing countries, and that the spatial organization, accessibility and design of urban space, as well as infrastructure and basic service provision, together with development policies, can promote or hinder social cohesion, equality and inclusion. In our understanding, there is need to bring constant realism to the fact that any presumption of homogeneity in the urban set-up is a recipe for silencing the many poor who are marginalized.

We want to commend the Government of Kenya for adopting the National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy (Sessional paper no. 2 of 2016) which is a logical step, given its advances in the implementation of several countrywide slum upgrading efforts. Support for the implementation of the Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy by County Governments will prove beneficial, not only to the ongoing national discourse in support of the policy implementation, but will also reflect the need for County Governments to themselves develop appropriate mechanism/ plan to provide adequate housing and manage slum upgrading within their local territory.

In light of the above the following are ways forward in which access to adequate and sustainable housing can contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11:

- i. Development of an Information Management System. Without an appropriate information management system, it is impossible to fully comprehend the housing stress in Kenya and therefore determine with clarity what efforts would be most appropriate and targeted. It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made to identify the performance indicators and benchmarks against which the achievements are measured.
- ii. Align Legislation to the Constitution of Kenya. The Government has undertaken to expedite the review of the National Housing Policy in order to align it with the Constitution, particularly with respect to social housing. Updated, relevant policies on social housing, land, planning and regulation, governance and financing can be a natural catalyst to the realisation of the right to housing. It is therefore recommended that concentrated efforts are made to fast track the review of the pending legislation and implementation of existing enabling legislation and policies.
- iii. Accept and Acknowledge Informal Settlements and their Importance.

The formal recognition of informal settlements demands that the Government and all other stakeholders take cognisance, not only of the challenges that face these settlements, but also the immense economic, social and cultural contribution of informal settlements. Slum upgrading cannot be sustained without a shared understanding that informal settlements are part and parcel of the cities and that all residents have a right to the city and to its services.

- iv. Prevent Formation of New Informal Settlements. Land and housing policies must be overhauled to ensure that all economic, social and cultural barriers that prevent the poor from accessing adequate housing are eliminated. Of particular concern is that the land and housing market responds to the needs of low- and middle-income housing especially for the rental market to avoid downward raiding by more well-off individuals.
- v. Participatory Frameworks in the Slum Upgrading. Process Participation involves joint consultation in the decision-making processes between the governments, international financiers of the project and the beneficiary communities. Participatory frameworks for slum upgrading processes are highly recommended, and particularly the use of information technology platforms. Through the use of internet based technologies, in particular web based geographic information systems (GIS), slum dwellers can engage meaningfully. In India, it is evidenced that having a map through the GIS, slum dwellers can more confidently and convincingly talk to the municipality about the problems affecting their community. They get an opportunity to influence and interact with the urban planning process. Technology based citizens' participation platforms increases interaction between different institutions, organizations and community partners on issues around slum upgrading processes. Feedback received on these platforms can be used to inform reports to better the work in slum upgrading processes and also review policies.

I thank you..