Statement on the New Urban Agenda
IHC Global Coalition for Inclusive Housing and Sustainable Cities
Changing Cities for Good

Habitat III Informal Hearings with Stakeholders
Civil Society Organizations
June 7, 2016

IHC Global, a membership coalition bringing together civil society, private sector and individual voices in support of inclusive, equitable urban development, commends the issuance and underlying principles of the draft New Urban Agenda (NUA). We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the draft and to make suggestions that will in our view contribute concretely to the paradigm shift that is envisioned.

IHC Global appreciates and supports the comprehensive and integrated nature of the NUA and its recognition that the future of the planet lies in the hands of the cities. Its alignment with Global Goal 11's emphasis on inclusiveness, resilience, safety and sustainability is a great strength. So, too, is its efforts to navigate the natural tensions among the varying perspectives of different stakeholder groups. We are particularly pleased to see the document also align well with The City We Need 2.0 document.

Placing housing and people at the center of city planning and resource allocations is an approach that IHC Global supports as being pragmatic and equitable. It is also an approach that can be used to drive positive change at the city level. IHC Global congratulates the Member States and the participants in the drafting process for a draft document that is the product of robust consultation.

In that context, IHC Global believes that the NUA would be strengthened by the following suggestions. We divide our comments into two sections:

- ❖ **Themes**
- ❖ **Implementation**

Themes: *It is important that the NUA be a document that can be "wrestled to the ground" and implemented. Therefore it is also important that it **not** be composed simply of high level abstractions and propositions. In that regard, we commend the NUA draft document for focusing attention on implementation. However, in IHC Global's view, it is equally important that the implementation of the NUA be grounded in principles and articulated aspirations that will continue to provide structure and rationale to global, national and local actions as the NUA is implemented. Such an articulation will enable current and future policymakers and implementers alike to continue to be inspired by the transcending vision while making specific decisions at the city, community and project level. It is a difficult and important balance to strike in this document that will live and serve as a reference point for years to come. IHC Global offers suggestions below.*

1. **Grounding the NUA in an overarching vision**: The NUA would be even more powerful if it could articulate at the outset a vision of greater, sustainable prosperity and enhanced "livability" of cities for all residents, making it clear that it is towards such a vision that the various dimensions of housing, public space, gender inclusion, land and other key issues contribute, that they are not ends in themselves but rather a means to a larger result. On a broader scale, the NUA should speak not only to urbanists but *also* to global and national policy makers concerned about cross-border, trans-national issues such as migration, climate change, health, stability and security. Raising the NUA beyond the prospering of cities to the level of global future is a compelling message.   IHC Global would welcome the NUA as an aspirational vehicle to advance a more informed global understanding both of the importance of cities and of formulating policies to embrace and address the urban nature of our world today.

2. **Addressing all dimensions of inequity and inequality**: Inequity and inequality are the major development challenges faced by the global community in the 21st century. IHC Global is pleased to see inequity and inequality acknowledged within the NUA. At a city level, inequity and inequality have economic, spatial, social and psychological dimensions. We believe that the NUA would benefit from a more explicit focus on overcoming these conditions – indeed that overcoming these be the cohering theme. It is our view that the extent to which the NUA will be able to achieve its ambitious reach will be determined by the ability and interest of nations and cities to advance and sustain a plan for equitable urban development that addresses existing conditions (such as inadequate housing and proliferating informal settlements) and *simultaneously* also anticipates future need, demand and potential.   Harnessing all human assets by addressing existing inequities that are both barriers and potential gateways to shared sustainable prosperity can be nothing but a good thing for cities.

3. **Role of all stakeholders and members of society:** The NUA is an inclusive document. As such, it should not be seen as intended only to address the concerns of poverty and related development, as critically important as these are, but also to respond to the needs and priorities of all citizens. An NUA for all is the only way that it will be enacted consistently over time. Within the NUA there are roles, as the draft rightly states, for civil society, local government and private sector. All are critical. The roles of civil society in its varied forms and of local government are well articulated. However, IHC Global believes that the NUA would be strengthened by greater clarity around the important role that the private sector has to play which conforms not only to corporate social responsibility but also to the economic engine that it provides. It would further benefit in the key section on finance by an expanded understanding of the public private partnership model in which the public sector leverages private investment to support community prioritized activities and development. This understanding that everyone has a role and a stake in the outcome will be necessary in order for the NUA to be sustained over the long period of its lifetime and so the document must strive to link its strategies to the premise that benefits accrue to everyone.

4. **City Level Leadership**: While there are many different forms of local government, which function differently from country to country with respect to taxing, resource mobilization and relationship to central or federal governments, it is nonetheless ***leadership at the city level,*** whatever its powers and authorities might be, that will be necessary to implement the NUA. IHC Global suggests that this enhanced role and responsibility be articulated in the NUA. As a strategy to bring about equitable urban development, IHC Global suggests further that creating

a shared vision of the city and its particular path towards prosperity and inclusiveness will be the linchpin of place-specific, effective implementation of the NUA.

Implementation: *The listing of specific concerns in the first part of the draft NUA would seem to require a similar listing of "implementation solutions" to each of these. However, before getting to the specifics of implementation, IHC Global thinks that the NUA should consider re-framing the document to recognize the fundamentals that must be in place and without which the NUA cannot be implemented. These include the following:*

- ❖ *Comprehensive Vision drawing on city assets (e.g., location, resource base, etc.), identifying challenges (e.g., influx of new residents, dominance of the informal sector, etc.), and enabling mapping and understanding of the intersection of systems, service delivery nodes, infrastructure and investment from a community and/or individual perspective, with an eye to spearheading and enabling development with equity.*
- ❖ *Availability of finance – at a city, project and individual level*
- ❖ *Availability of land and clear title*
- ❖ *Meaningful stakeholder and community participation*
- ❖ *Political will*
- ❖ *Communications, monitoring, measurement and course correction, and*
- ❖ *Understanding of cities as dynamic entities changing and evolving over time.*

We suggest that the NUA be re-structured to build on the foundations for the NUA vision. From IHC Global's perspective the critical elements include:

1. **Housing at the center**: IHC Global supports this principle. We view it as being at the center of the NUA and of a city's concern. We view it also as being a range of housing options, catering to all points on the income and demand spectrum, consistent with the characteristics and demographics of the particular city. The NUA should make these points explicit, consistent with the theme of "cities for all."
2. **Informal settlements as a priority**: Addressing existing substandard living conditions in the burgeoning informal settlements should be integral to the NUA and merits its own policy attention and investment track, supported by the international donor and investment community. Not to do so will undermine future development.
3. **Land for housing and secure tenure**: These two lacks impede economic advancement of families that lack them and provide a poverty trap that is hard to escape. Thus, they also are key barriers to greater equity and equality. Addressing these lacks through land use policy, regularization of title, reasonable accommodation between informal and formal building and other standards, and establishment of reliable title registry processes, greatly enabled by technology, should be prioritized. These can form the base from which greater prosperity, resilience and inclusiveness can grow.
4. **Local government capacity**: There is variability among the institutional capacity of local governments both within and among countries. Priority should be accorded to supporting the capacity enhancement (which will include training; financial resources, management and citizen accountability; systems development (including incorporation of technology to reach the urban "last mile"); human resources; and mandates for action with regulatory and legal authority to address key local issues (however these might be appropriately provided given each country context), among others. In line with the theme of the NUA, in IHC Global's view, local

governments' capacity enhancement should allow them to make better policy choices to enable local, multi-stakeholder roles, build trust with all constituencies, prioritize strategically, and make equitable investment decisions.

5. **Universal data capture informing city level decision-making**: In addition to the important attention paid to smart approaches to data collection and the use of that data in an intelligent manner, to support equitable development, the NUA should articulate the importance of universal data collection systems that include also residents of informal settlements and those who "live outside the grid." Emphasis on developing integrated data systems (part of local government capacity strengthening) available to all stakeholders will also enable transparency and accountability. Without complete data, city level decisions and policies will not be able to guide equitable development effectively.

6. **Key policy issues drive more equitable urban development**: Consistent with the point made in the "Themes" section above, IHC Global believes that policies addressing certain key issues will be the most helpful in helping those trapped in poverty to find pathways towards fulfilling their own individual potential and maximizing their participation in and contribution to society as a whole. These policy issues should be highlighted within the NUA and they importantly include:

   ❖ Urban water and sanitation accessibility,
   ❖ Social and economic inclusion strategies for all segments of the population,
   ❖ Inclusion of migrants and refugees ,
   ❖ Climate adaptation and resilience particular with respect to the urban poor,
   ❖ Assertion and application of property rights for all, especially including women, and
   ❖ Urban food security.

Each of these areas are barriers to greater equity but with the right policies and programs in place are also gateways to greater equity and equality within cities and so also to more inclusive, sustainable, safe and resilient places in which people can thrive, innovate, and help to secure a better global future for us all.