# Cities for Adequate Housing

Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments for the Right to Housing and the Right to the City

New York, 16th July 2018.

Building on the milestones of the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III (Quito, 2016) and the momentum of “The Shift”, a global initiative on the right to housing, the signatory cities below take part in this High-Level Political Forum of the United Nations to follow up on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” by 2030), with the support of UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing.

We, the local governments, are the public officials who are most sensitive to the everyday needs of our citizens. In the contemporary world, lack of national and state funding, market deregulation, growing power of global corporations, and increasing competition for scarce real estate often become a burden on our neighbourhoods, causing serious distortions in their social fabric, and putting the goal of ensuring equitable, inclusive, and just cities at risk. We, the local governments strongly believe that all people should have actual access to “adequate housing”, understood by the United Nations as the one that has the correct “affordability”, “legal security of tenure”, “habitability”, “availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure”“accessibility”, “location” and “cultural adequacy”. Nevertheless, real estate speculation, high cost housing, inadequate regulation, socio-spatial segregation, insecurity of tenure, substandard housing, homelessness, urban sprawl or informal urban enlargements without requisite facilities or infrastructure, are growing phenomena that threaten the equity and sustainability of our cities. Given this situation, local governments cannot stay on the sidelines, and need to take a central role. For all these reasons, we call for the following actions.

## 01

## More powers to better regulate the real estate market

We demand more legal and fiscal powers to regulate the real estate market in order to fight against speculation and guarantee the social function of the city.

We, the local governments require regulatory and enforcement tools to protect our neighbourhoods from speculation. Furthermore, we need the tools to protect the use of housing as homes for people living in the cities we represent. We also require instruments to regulate the housing rental market, protecting tenants from speculative bubbles and giving them the right to greater security of tenure. Likewise, we demand mechanisms to implement value capture from real estate operations for the common good, both in new developments and in urban renewal. Finally, we need powers to fight substandard or vacant housing.

## 02

## More funds to improve our public housing stocks

We demand more resources and commit increased investment to strengthen the public housing rental stock in all of our neighbourhoods.

We, the local governments demand more resources and investment to strengthen our public housing stock. We must promote unique solutions that respond proportionally to the seriousness of the housing emergency and promote innovative, fairer, sustainable, more agile and economically efficient alternatives. Public housing should contribute to achieving cities where all persons have equal access to affordable housing. This should include its use, alongside adequately-funded public services and welfare systems, to prevent homelessness and to ensure no one needs to sleep rough. Furthermore, we must guarantee a balanced distribution of affordable housing in the city, in order to promote fair housing, combat socio-spatial segregation, and alleviate the tension between centres and peripheries.

## 03

## More tools to co-produce public-private community-driven alternative housing

We are committed to boosting mixed residential solutions, which are neither solely government-driven nor purely based on commercial gain.

We, the local governments need to be able to count on the strength and talent from our cities’ productive and social fabric to co-produce mixed solutions, instead of exclusively focusing on public or business-led schemes. We must prioritize subsidies and tax exemptions for the creation of affordable housing. In addition, we aim to explore, amongst others, various options adapted to each city’s situation such as the cooperative or the community land trust housing models and create public-private operators to invest capital in the creation and preservation of affordable rental housing. Likewise, we must collaborate with non-governmental organisations and foster the participation, self-management and empowerment of residents, supporting good practices such as collaborative design or assisted self-construction.

## 04

## An urban planning that combines adequate housing with quality, inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods

We are committed to planning mixed, compact and polycentric cities where housing benefits from a balanced context and contributes to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the urban fabric.

We, the local governments must promote the compactness of urban fabrics to combat urban sprawl. We need urban planning practices that avoid the dependence on the private vehicle and return to the model of accessible, walkable and bikable cities that are provided with efficient public transport networks. We must boost existing urban fabrics and promote mixed uses in all of our neighbourhoods. We must promote fair housing and integrated neighbourhoods. We should also provide alternatives to the expansion of new informal settlements by focusing on the causes that lead to them and not on their victims.

## 05

## A municipalist cooperation in residential strategies

We want to enhance cooperation and solidarity within city networks that defend affordable housing and equitable, just, and inclusive cities by boosting long-term strategies on a metropolitan scale.

We, the local governments are committed towards cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and practice in urban and residential policies. We also propose joining forces to call for more resources and powers from both national and international supra-municipal bodies. We need the principle of subsidiarity to be applied to housing and urban policies of city and central governments. Furthermore, we call upon the cities to form a joint front when negotiating with global actors or digital platforms. In addition, we commit ourselves towards practising metropolitan solidarity so as to overcome competitive localisms, centre-peripheral tensions and territorial imbalances. Finally, we commit ourselves to reaching city agreements that transcend governmental terms of office and guarantee the coherence and continuity of long-term strategies.

# Join the Declaration

## A worldwide commitment for the right to housing

The Declaration is based on a clear commitment to promote renewed housing strategies, and to do it in terms of social inclusion and human rights standards. Initiated by the City of Barcelona and promoted within UCLG by its Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, this global call for action builds on the #MakeTheShift campaign launched by the UN Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. It is particularly linked to concrete challenges pervading the realization of the right to housing, such as the lack of national funding, market deregulation and the commodification of housing.

Signatory cities, organizations and individuals share this common diagnosis. They also commit to implement local actions and policies to advance the right to housing.

Signatory local and regional governments may further join the global Community of Practice rallying cities for housing: a space within the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) to exchange experiences, elaborate policy recommendations and organize joint advocacy action.

## The Community of Practice on Housing

The Community of Practice on Housing will be the space for signatory cities to transform the Declaration into concrete actions for the right to housing. The Community will work to:

Identify main obstacles and opportunities for adequate housing policies, both in the Global North and South;

Exchange, share and assess policies and practices aimed at fostering access to adequate housing for all;

Promote successful policies and practices to tackle real estate speculation and guarantee the right to housing at international level;

Develop joint advocacy strategies at the global level to advance the right to housing in international and national agendas, contributing to the #MakeTheShift campaign;

Disseminate the Declaration among signatory cities’ partners and allies (networks, civil society, academia) in order to raise awareness and promote ownership of its content at the local level.

## How to join the Declaration

Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Durban, Lisbon, London, Mexico City, Montreal, Montevideo, Plaine Commune, New York, Paris and Seoul are already part of this movement – and they need you too!

### Local and regional governments

Please send an email to citiesforhousing.org to express your interest in joining the Declaration.

Following this initial email, you will receive a template formal letter to be signed by the Mayor or President of the government you represent. You will further be invited to join the community of practice by filling in an online form.

After that, your city will officially be part of the global movement of cities for the right to housing – and your name will appear on this website as a signatory local government.

### **Other organizations and institutions**

**Please send an email to citiesforhousing.org to express your interest in joining the Declaration. The message should include a formal letter by the head of the organization.**

### Individuals

Please send an email to citiesforhousing.org to express your interest in joining the Declaration, including the name and title of the signatory person.