

Statement of women in SAGE in the second session of 2020 of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat will be held virtually from 27 to 29 October 2020

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Magdalena García Hernández, Huairou Commission

Bufete de Estudios Interdisciplinarios AC

Many inhabitants in various nations of the world continue to be mired in the pandemic with relapses that take away the horizon of overcoming this stage, from which we must resume the good practices developed in association with UN Habitat in these critical months, in which we have been able to share strategies and activities that women, particularly organized grassroots women groups have deployed and undertaken help mitigate the effects of the pandemic, as well as planning for the recovery phase.

In this context, this is the opportune time to strengthen governance and our partnership with UN Habitat.

In this unprecedented time and with many governments still looking and working on their responses and strategies, it is timely for the United Nations agencies such as UN-Habitat to take the leadership in initiating and supporting partnerships between national, local and all stakeholders, especially women and community-based/grassroots groups who have been on the frontline on the possible ways to mitigate the effects of this crisis in accordance with the characteristics of the stage in which each country is.

UN-Habitat Covid-19 Policy and Programme Framework, and its Covid-19 Response Plan specifically highlighted the importance of working with community-based/grassroots organisations in responding to the pandemic and the opportunity to build resilience. The pandemic is not going away overnight, it has a long-term impact on the life of people and the sustainable urbanization that we are all working on; thus, it is important to ensure that this policy is incorporated, implemented and resourced as a key supplementary element in the implementation of UN-Habitat's 2020-23 Strategic Plan. There should be specific indicators to track its outcome and results.

Grassroots organisations play a key role which city leaders should recognize and thus partner with in their efforts to reach out to people and catalyze actions; they ensure that the voice of communities are heard, that communities are engaged and partnered with in preparing and responding to the challenges of managing the outbreak, strategizing to keep their community safe and mobilizing resources to bring the needed support. They are at the frontline to ensure actions can reach scale and keep trust of the population. Amplifying the voices of grassroots, especially those led by women, and recognizing their contributions and roles in the urbanization process will lead to innovations and initiatives critical to localizing and realizing the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs.

I want to also remind us of the UN Secretary General United Nations Policy Brief: *The Impact of Covid-19 on Women* published in April 2020 that calls for both member states and UN agencies to work with women leaders in ensuring equal representation and decision-making power in designing, planning and resourcing any programs to respond to the pandemic and its recovery. The Policy pointed that women are impacted to a greater extent by the pandemic, with disproportionate burdens in domestic and care work; increase in intimate partner violence and difficulties in caring for them; greater exposure due to being a very high percentage of health sector personnel; and for registering much higher levels of unemployment, and loss of our livelihoods, all of which need to be visualized to solve. This Policy guidance is very much in line with

several Resolutions passed at the 1st UN Habitat Assembly in May 2019, particularly the Resolution titled *““ Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements”*. **We Call upon Member States to Resource the implementation of this Resolution that could put UN-Habitat as a leader in contributing to gender equality and women’s empowerment during the United Nations Decade of Action.**

If we apply the Disaster-Risk Approach with its methodology of the classification of Stages to the evolution of the COVID-19 epidemic, there are three (3) steps: 1) the emergency in which the priority is on human lives and basic needs; 2) the transition period, that is the beginning of the recovery of economic and social activities; and 3) reconstruction – the recovery and improvement phase of the capacities of people, companies, institutions and communities. This stage has already started in some countries and it is necessary to systematize their strategies to ensure inclusiveness and partnership key that provide lessons learned and ways to accelerate the exit from this pandemic situation.

One of the active spaces on learning and partnering during this period has been the UN-Habitat World Urban Campaign (WUC) Urban Thinkers Campus sessions that hosted and provided the platform for exchanges and knowledge sharing. Members of the Huairou and many WUC partners have been able to disseminate and highlights practices and tools by grassroots and women-led organizations, as well as proposals and actions that would propel transformative pathways.

It is now very timely for UN-Habitat to integrate the anti-crisis policies in implementing its 2020-23 Strategic Plan that is people-centered and position its leadership role in developing relevant public policy tools to achieve the SDGs. We take the opportunity to share some points that could be considered as guides for governments as well as development agencies, donors and other partners in reinforcing their strategies that the sustainable urbanization we work for will Leave No One Behind:

- ✧ To resolve the unequal extension of the working hours between women and men due to the confinement/lockdown and the caregiving roles-responsibilities;
- ✧ To commit implementation and resource eradicate violence against women in this confinement;
- ✧ To provide incentives to adapt the home, which in many countries and families is now also the school and the office, to minimize conflict, organize and limit working hours, reconcile and harmonize school, family and work lives;
- ✧ To promote and support initiatives/programs for the production of food security which include strengthening the link rural-urban link as well as the needed infrastructures and upgrading the related (Clean) technologies ;
- ✧ To invest the infrastructure needed that guarantee accessible and affordable universal communication & digital inclusion - access to telephone and internet services, smartphones or tablets to ensure continuous education for girls and young people, as well as to enable productive work and communication for all.

The Huairou Commission with over 120 member organisations in 45 countries around the world look forward to strengthen our partnership with UN-Habitat, all member states and other partners in this journey.