

Advisory Group on Gender Issues, AGGI Statement

**delivered by Prof. Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, Chair of AGGI and Director of the
UNESCO Chair on Gender, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
UN Habitat Executive Board 15-16 November 2021**

Dear Executive Director, Member States and colleagues

Women from all over the world thank Member States and UN Habitat for collectively advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. I am here in my capacity as Chair of the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI), which represents all women as an independent advisory body that advises and supports the Executive Director on all aspects of UN Habitat's work. AGGI was in fact created in response to the request by the UN-Habitat Governing Council at its twenty-third session in April 2011 (Governing Council Resolution 23/1) to the UN-Habitat Executive Director to strengthen UN-Habitat's gender equality and women's empowerment focus. And more recently, at the first UN Habitat Assembly in May 2019, member states passed a Resolution 1/4 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 are here to support the Executive Director and UN Habitat in strengthening these goals by mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment into UN-Habitat's normative and operational work. As Member States review the response of UN-Habitat to this and other key resolutions, we are committed to ensuring that UN Habitat policies and programmes reflect inclusion and human rights with women's empowerment at its heart. We welcome and support the expansion of the focus to all groups in sustainable urbanisation, but not at the expense of urgent needs of women. Women are not only disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, conflict, climate change and pandemics, but they are also partners and resilient leaders in the creation of green, just, sustainable, and prosperous cities. Women- including urban poor, living in informal settlements, working in informal economies, grassroots, displaced and at risk of multiple threats - are working against huge challenges to survive for their families and communities.

Women have been carrying out projects and programmes since the setting up of UN Habitat to advance gender equality, with the Women and Habitat programme established in 1990. Women's groups such as the

Huairou Commission have been active since the Istanbul Habitat II Conference, the same year UN Habitat's first gender equality policy was adopted. Through dozens of global meetings women have been self-organising, lobbying and supporting UN Habitat and Member States to strive for recognition of women's lived experiences, voices, and human rights in the face of discrimination, poverty, exclusion, climate change, conflict, and pandemics. In the context of the pandemic, women of all ages, including girls are facing additional discrimination, including the extra burden of increased care tasks, violence, and vulnerability to their livelihoods and jobs, as highlighted by the Secretary General. We must recognise that women are key contributors at the forefront of implementing the New Urban Agenda to ensure we achieve the SDGs.

We should not be complacent with the present situation, for there are risks that potentially undermine the hard-fought gains of women in cities and human settlements. We call for the continued support of member states to ensure that women's empowerment is properly embedded in all policies and programmes of UN Habitat, as demanded by your own resolutions, the SDGs, and the NUA. AGGI is committed to providing advice to UN Habitat, to finalize the 'Revised Gender Policy and Plan', and to position gender equality and women's empowerment as a key transformative path in the implementation of its activities, flagship programs and technical cooperation.

A recent evaluation of UN Habitat Gender Policies found that AGGI has an important role in developing and implementing gender equality in sustainable urbanisation and that the agency could make fuller use of AGGI. Current AGGI members are supporting UN Habitat in the process of nominating new members, and we look forward to member states' contributions. We adopted the Valencia Declaration in October 2021 to lay out a vision for Gender Equality and women's empowerment agenda with priority solutions and recommendations.

We thank Member States and UN Habitat on behalf of all the women in the world who are grateful for this opportunity and support to women's participation in better communities and cities.

16th November 2021

Prof. Inés Sánchez de Madariaga

Chair AGGI

Advisory Group on Gender Issues to the Executive Director of UN Habitat