Looking Beyond the Horizon: WRI Responds to the Draft New Urban Agenda with an Eye Towards Implementation Post-Quito

The Draft New Urban Agenda comes at a pivotal moment when negotiators and stakeholders from across the globe are convening in Surabaya at PrepCom 3 to discuss, debate, and agree upon the route we will take to the cities of the future. This draft established a clear and inclusive vision for what sustainable cities should be and cuts across sectors to incorporate good governance, finance, equality, and accessibility – all of the factors that enable the technical interventions necessary for the paradigm shift we need.

However, one challenge remains for the Habitat negotiators: once the document is signed and affirmed, those responsible for its implementation will need more than a visionary statement of intent. We encourage the negotiators to look past Quito when deliberating the final version of the text to deliver a solid groundwork of priorities and commitments to action that provide clear guidance on how to implement the New Urban Agenda, the roles of different stakeholder groups, and pointed next steps.

Further Strengthening the Essential Linkages to Global Processes

While WRI recognizes the many references within the draft text to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the final declaration should more fully commit to aligning NUA implementation, monitoring, and reporting with SDG frameworks through an established action platform that enables seamless and non-duplicative efforts for implementing agents, such as city decision-makers, businesses, and financing bodies.

On Climate Change, Paragraph 70 specifically mentions a commitment to promote climate action and to "pursuing efforts" to achieve the 1.5 degree commitment of the Paris Agreement. However, it could be a positive and much appreciated inclusion to specifically reference the important role cities will play in achieving the 1.5 degree goal and the opportunities that the journey presents. Emphasizing the importance of this goal from the beginning of the declaration would support the unique position of cities to make significant contributions to a positive global change.

Reporting on Progress

The language in paragraph 153 sets the stage for a strong formal biennial reporting framework for countries, but the establishment of a voluntary reporting framework for private sector, civil society, and other non-state actors could create momentum for commitments and action. This type of voluntary reporting framework engages stakeholders across society to contribute to national goals and incentivize investment in implementation and innovative partnerships.

Additionally, the proposal in paragraph 153 should more directly link to other global processes to align with and build upon the progress made in the pursuit of those commitments. This would not only ease the reporting process for national governments, but also bolster the urban implementation of SDG and climate goals by further emphasizing the city's role in their achievement. We recommend that negotiators prioritize the development of a transparent formal reporting framework for national governments to be affirmed in Quito.

Enabling Agents for Change: Finance and the Role of Local Governments

In support of a framework for reporting and implementation, the New Urban Agenda could be further strengthened by emphasizing the enabling agents for those activities, including finance and role of local governments. The New Urban Agenda mentions stronger coordination between different levels of government, but at the same time makes less space for cities and local governments in the policy and planning processes. In implementation of the New Urban Agenda, local representatives and local conditions are paramount, and this consideration should be the basis from where all other policy begins.

Another opportunity to strengthen the declaration is through greater exploration of and clarity around the financial and funding instruments that will enable the commitments prioritized by the document. The draft touches upon many key financing topics, including city mobilization of their own source revenues, improved financial management, frameworks for improving access to finance, and re/insurance actors, but often only in passing and without specificity. One area that could support the financial implementation mechanisms of the New Urban Agenda is the relationship between private sector and civil society. While briefly mentioned in paragraph 127, it is unclear what it means to stimulate their "participation in sustainable urban development." It is critical that the final draft include at least several modalities that are vital within the context of finance, including public-private partnerships, innovative finance (i.e. community and end user finance, crowd finance, etc.), and provision of upfront capital to providers of sustainable technology, infrastructure, and equipment.

The Habitat III Legacy: Towards A Quito Action Agenda

We must ensure that Habitat III leaves a legacy of action and real change by creating momentum with ambitious commitments, strong partnerships, and robust follow-up plans. Through the formal establishment within the text of a Quito Action Agenda, we can create a platform for knowledge, action, and reporting across stakeholder groups. Similar to the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA), the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA), and the Paris Process on Mobility and Climate (PPMC), a Quito Action Agenda can unite diverse stakeholder behind one flag for centralized initiatives and campaigns and provide a platform for actors across sectors – business, non-state, and civil society, as well as nations – to showcase their commitments and activities that contribute to the achievement of the goals stated in the New Urban Agenda.

Sectoral Feedback

This recent draft of the New Urban Agenda has shown significant improvement from the initial Zero Draft in its sector-specific recommendations for the cities of the future. However, there remain some areas that could be further strengthened, specifically within the housing and mobility sectors. These issues of access, safety, and demand are all rooted in one common theme: creating political infrastructure that levels the playing field for all city residents. By incentivizing and improving equitable access to services, urban communities will see improved quality of life.

A Nuanced Approach to Housing Access

The issue of housing is well covered in the New Urban Agenda. The sections on housing and urban form show marked improvement from previous versions, including concepts like polycentricity, compactness, mixed use, and infill. The declaration could be further strengthened by placing more emphasis on providing access to affordable rental housing, as this is a more achievable goal, considering the anticipated mass migration from rural to urban areas. Striving to provide tenure to all as the only solution may be unrealistic and cost prohibitive in many contexts.

Similarly, when looking through the lens of equity, the declaration could be strengthened by focusing more on the socio-economic drivers of homelessness, in addition to its references to mitigating their results. In recent years, homelessness has spiked in many major cities due to a combination of poor housing, immigration, and employment policies. In the UK, for instance, 3.5 million families are "one paycheck away from homelessness." It is essential that the negotiators consider homelessness with more nuance and commit not only to helping house those who live on the streets, but also to establishing preventative measures and adequate social services.

Managing Mobility Demand

The most recent draft of the New Urban Agenda acknowledges the importance of sustainable mobility and its role in equitable, sustainable urban growth. Mobility in the New Urban Agenda is discussed in depth in the review by the Partnership for Sustainable Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT), to which we contributed and fully endorse as a partner. The inclusion of commitments around national, subnational, and local mobility planning should be applauded, as it is an important pillar to ensure a long-lasting paradigm shift towards the city of the future. However, there are still several aspects that could be improved upon to further strengthen the NUA in enabling a paradigm shift towards sustainable mobility.

Many cities have met success in transitioning to more livable places, not only by enabling high-quality non-motorized and public transport solutions, but also by simultaneously managing the demand for individual motorized travel, which is the most unsafe, highest polluting, and lease cost-effective mode of travel. Therefore, it is important to have a call for action on managing demand through several financing mechanisms, such as parking fees, congestion pricing, and license plate auctioning. These mechanisms not only help shape a more sustainable travel demand pattern in cities, but can also help raise revenue at the local level to fund sustainable transport solutions.

Safety as Key Pillar of Sustainable Mobility

The language around road safety and safe mobility could be strengthened in order to more distinctly align with other global processes, including Sustainable Development Goal 3.6, which calls for halving the number of road deaths and accidents globally by 2020 to 650,000. This commitment is especially relevant in cities, and would mean a reduction to 300,000 deaths per year worldwide. Additionally, specific references to Vision Zero and the Systematic Approach to Road Safety, the five Pillars of the Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety, and the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety would further emphasize the importance of this issue and the existing opportunities for collaboration with other global initiatives.

Importance of Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building

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There is currently a lack in sufficient capacity in many countries to implement sustainable mobility solutions. A call for addressing the needs to fill this gap should be an important element of the NUA. Paragraph 135 calls for greater capacity building to enable civic participation and governance, but the declaration would be further strengthened by highlighting the importance of capacity building for mobility and other more technical planning fields at all levels (school, university level, and within the current administration), towards increasing the capacity of the public sector to create strong, sustainable, and high quality urban infrastructure and plans.

Specific Text Recommendations

In addition to overarching messaging suggestions, WRI would like to suggest the following specific changes and additions to the text:

- **10(b):** We envision cities and human settlements that: are participatory, promote civic engagement and democratic governance processes, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces, enhance social interactions, cultural expressions and political participation, and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met;
- **11(c):** To achieve our vision, we resolve to adopt a New Urban Agenda guided by the following interlinked principles: Environmental sustainability, by promoting clean and efficient energy, resource and land use efficiency in urban development, as well as protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, including adopting healthy lifestyles in harmony with nature; ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; building urban resilience; reducing disaster risks; and mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- **20:** We recognize that the growing inequality and the persistence of multiple forms and dimensions of poverty, including the rising number of slum and informal settlement dwellers, is affecting both developed and developing countries, and that the spatial organization, accessibility, and design of urban space, together with development and broader economic and social policies, can promote or hinder social cohesion, equality, and inclusion.
- **24:** We commit to strengthen the coordination role of local governments in the provision of social and basic services, including generating investments in communities that are affected by recurrent and protracted humanitarian crises. We further commit to provide adequate services, accommodation, and opportunities for decent and productive work for crisis-affected persons in urban settings, working with the local communities and local governments to identify and co-produce opportunities for engaging and developing local, durable, and dignified solutions, while ensuring that aid flows also to affected persons and host communities to prevent regression of their development.
- **28:** We commit to ensure equitable and affordable access to basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without any form of discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, sustainable and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, nutritious food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, healthcare and family planning, education, culture, and information and communication technologies. We further commit to ensure that these services are responsive to the rights and needs of women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and other persons in vulnerable situations such as refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of migration status. In this regard, we encourage the elimination of legal, institutional, socio-economic, or physical barriers and adequate participatory mechanisms and regulatory frameworks to ensure the differential needs of these groups are adequately represented and expressed.
- **29:** We commit to promote increased security of tenure for all, access to affordable rental housing, recognizing the plurality of tenure types, and to develop fit-for-purpose, and age and gender responsive solutions within the continuum of land and property rights, with particular attention to women's land security of tenure as key to their empowerment.
- **30:** We commit to promote appropriate measures in cities and human settlements that facilitate access for persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment of cities, in particular to public spaces, public

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transport, housing, education and health facilities, government offices, to public information and communication, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public.

- **35:** We commit to promote institutional, political, legal, and financial mechanisms in cities and human settlements to broaden inclusive democratic platforms and technologies that allow meaningful participation in decisionmaking, planning, and follow-up processes for all, and we encourage the pursuit of open government principles of transparency, accountability, public participation, and open data, as supported by the Open Government Partnership.

- **36:** We commit to support sub-national and local governments, as appropriate, in fulfilling their key role in strengthening the interface among all stakeholders, offering opportunities for dialogue, including through age and gender responsive approaches, and with particular attention to the rights and needs of, and potential contributions from, all segments of society, including men and women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, gender and sexual identites, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of migration status, race, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status.

- **42:** We commit to facilitate effective participation and collaboration among all stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector, civil society and civil society organizations, women and youth organizations, as well as those representing persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, professionals, academic institutions, trade unions, employers' organizations, migrant associations and others, in ascertaining the opportunities for urban economic development as well as in identifying and addressing existing and emerging challenges.

- **45:** We commit to develop urban spatial frameworks, including urban planning and design instruments that promote sustainable management of land, appropriate compactness and density, polycentrism, and mixed uses, through infill or planned urban extension strategies as applicable, to trigger economies of scale and agglomeration, and enhance resource efficiency, urban resilience, environmental sustainability, and economic opportunity and prosperity.

- **47:** We commit to increase economic productivity through the generation and use of sustainable, renewable, and affordable energy and transport infrastructure, achieving the benefits of connectivity and reducing the financial, environmental, and public health costs of inefficient mobility, congestion, air pollution, urban heat island effect, and noise. We also commit to pay particular attention to the energy and transport needs of all people, particularly the poor and those living in informal settlements.

- **57:** We commit to facilitate the sustainable management of natural resources in cities and human settlements in a manner that protects, improves, and restores the urban ecosystem and environmental services, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and promotes disaster risk reduction and management, while fostering sustainable economic development and all people's well-being and quality of life, through environmentally sound urban planning, infrastructure, and basic services.

- **59:** We commit to give particular consideration to urban deltas, coastal areas and other environmentally sensitive areas, highlighting their importance as ecosystems' providers of significant resources for transport, food security, economic prosperity, biodiversity, ecosystem services and resilience, and integrating appropriate measures to factor them into sustainable urban planning and development.

- **61:** We commit to support local and efficient provision of goods and basic services, leveraging the proximity of resources, recognizing that a heavy reliance on distant or inefficient sources of energy, water, food, and materials poses sustainability challenges, including vulnerability to service supply disruptions, and that local provision enables better access for inhabitants to resources.

- **63:** We commit to urban and territorial planning processes and spatial development practices that incorporate integrated water resources planning and management at both local and basin levels, considering the urban-rural continuum, at the local and territorial scales, ensuring the participation of relevant stakeholders and communities.

- **65:** We commit to promote environmentally sound waste management by preventing, reducing, re-using and recycling of waste, minimizing landfills, and converting to energy to waste only when it is the choice with the lowest environmental impact.

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- **66:** We commit to support sub-national and local governments, as appropriate, to develop renewable and affordable energy and to promote energy efficiency, which are essential to enable the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns, improve local economic competitiveness and opportunity, and help to create new decent jobs, improve public health, reduce the costs of energy supply, and increase energy access.

- **71:** We commit to support the medium to long term adaptation planning process in an iterative and continuous manner, as well as city-level climate vulnerability and impact assessments to inform adaptation plans, policies, programs and actions that build resilience of urban inhabitants, including through the use of ecosystem based adaptation.

- **75:** We will anchor the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda in inclusive, equitable and implementable urban policies, as appropriate, including land and housing policies, to mainstream sustainable urban development as an integral part of national development strategies and plans, supported, as appropriate, by national, sub-national, and local institutional and regulatory frameworks, ensuring that they are adequately linked to transparent and accountable finance and governance mechanisms and sound urban and territorial planning guidelines.

- **79:** We will strengthen the capacity of sub-national and local governments to implement effective local and metropolitan multilevel and multi-municipal governance, beyond administrative borders and based on functional territories, ensuring the involvement of sub-national and local governments in decision making, providing them with necessary authority and resources to manage critical urban and metropolitan concerns. We will promote metropolitan governance that is inclusive and encompasses legal frameworks, and reliable financing mechanisms, including sustainable debt management.

- **85:** We will implement planned urban extensions, infill, as well as renewal, regeneration, upgrading, and retrofitting of urban areas, as appropriate, including in slums and informal settlements, ensuring spatial equity and integrated and participatory approaches involving all stakeholders and inhabitants, avoiding displacement and spatial and socio-economic segregation, while preserving cultural heritage and preventing and containing urban sprawl.

- **94:** We will develop policies, tools, mechanisms, and financing models that promote access to a wide range of affordable housing options and consider shifting from a predominantly private ownership to rental and other tenure options, including cooperative solutions such as co-housing, community land trust, and other forms of collective tenure, in order to improve the supply of housing, especially for low-income groups and to prevent segregation. This will include support to incremental housing and self-build schemes, with special attention to slums and informal settlements upgrading programs. We will ensure that financial regulation allows and incentivizes these approaches.

- **97:** We will promote the development of adequate and enforceable regulations in the housing and buildings sector, including building codes, standards, development permits, land use by-laws and ordinances, and planning regulations, while avoiding displacement and homelessness, ensuring sustainability, quality, affordability, health, safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, and resilience. We will also promote differentiated analysis of housing supply and demand based on high-quality, timely, and reliable disaggregated data at the national, sub-national, and local levels, considering specific social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions.

- **100(a):** We will provide access for all to safe, age and gender responsive, affordable, accessible, and sustainable urban mobility and land and sea transport systems, enabling meaningful participation in social and economic activities in cities and human settlements, by integrating transport and mobility plans into overall urban plans and promoting a wide range of transport and mobility options, in particular through: Supporting a significant increase in accessible safe, efficient, affordable and sustainable infrastructure for public transport as well as non-motorized options such as walking and cycling, prioritizing them over individual motorized transportation.

- **102:** We will support the development of these mechanisms and frameworks, based on sustainable national urban transport and mobility policies, for sustainable, open, and transparent procurement, and regulation of transport and mobility services in urban and metropolitan areas, including sustainable new mobility solutions, as well as the development of clear and transparent contractual relationships between local governments and transport and mobility providers which further public interest and define mutual obligations.

- **106:** We will equip public water and sanitation utilities with the capacity to implement sustainable water management systems, including sustainable maintenance of urban infrastructure services, through capacity development –including knowledge sharing and peer learning partnerships—with the goal of progressively eliminating inequalities, and promoting

both the universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and efficient and affordable water and sanitation systems.

- **107:** We will promote energy efficiency and renewable energy, and support local governments to apply them in public buildings, infrastructures and facilities, as well as in taking advantage of their direct control, where applicable, of local infrastructure and codes, to foster more efficient use of energy in end-use sectors, such as residential, commercial and industrial buildings, industry, transport, outdoor lighting, water systems, waste and sanitation. We also encourage the adoption of building performance codes and standards, renewable portfolio targets, energy efficiency labelling and public procurement policies on energy, among other modalities as appropriate, to achieve energy efficiency targets. We will also prioritize, where appropriate, smart grid, distributed generation, district energy systems and community energy plans to improve synergies between renewable energy, energy efficiency, and energy access and reliability.

- **150:** We acknowledge the importance of local governments, as key and active partners in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda and call upon them to develop, together with national and sub-national governments, implementable follow-up and review mechanisms at the local level, ensuring that local conditions and capacity is taken into account. Their capacity should be strengthened in order to enhance their contribution, including by convening them through their associations and appropriate platforms such as the United Nations Advisory Committee on Local Authorities (UNACLA).

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