



Huairou Commission

Statement to the 21st Session of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council

18 April 2007

On behalf of the Huairou Commission member networks which include the Federation de Mujeres Municipalistas de America Latina y el Caribe (FEMUM), GROOTS International, the International Council of Women, Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF), Women and Cities International, Women and Habitat - Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and the Women and Peace Network, and including the additional women's groups, organizations and partners who have joined the deliberations and discussions with us here, the Huairou Commission makes the following acknowledgements and recommendations to the UN-Habitat Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013 and to the 21st Session of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council.

The Huairou Commission, its member networks, and the many women we support here today, have been working with the UN-Habitat in meetings, deliberations, campaigns and programs to ensure the contributions, priorities and issues that women bring are recognized, accounted for and supported within the UN-Habitat throughout its work.

In particular, for the Third World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada held in 2006, the Huairou Commission delegation represented over 100,000 families living and working in poor communities, in developing and developed countries, and that our strength was that we are grounded in the local realities of our unique places. From this perspective we presented the following statement and actionable ideas:

We present a set of actionable ideas that cut across women's efforts on caring community development, economic empowerment, promoting safety and security, secure tenure and housing, and disaster risk reduction. In particular we call upon officials from international aid agencies, government ministries, local authorities, and professional associations to share decision-making power and financial resources with low-income grassroots women's groups by:

1. *Locating settlement planning, program implementation and contracting, and monitoring and evaluation activities in the community and establishing procedures to ensure grassroots women's groups are formally and equitable represented in each aspect.*
2. *Creating new financial mechanisms and budget lines that enable grassroots women's groups to:*
 - a. *Own and operate public space (for programs and public meetings) so that our participation in civic life is supported and sustainable, and*
 - b. *Undertake ongoing community to community peer learning exchanges that recognize grassroots expertise, transfer and scale up effective women-led development strategies, and provide peer technical support that will reduce the reliance on high paid, non-technical assistants who drain financial resources from our communities*
3. *Resourcing our ongoing, long-term initiatives as community developers with the capacity to negotiate with government, private sector and other development actors to advance pro-poor and democratic programs and policies over the long term.*

Network Members: Asian Women & Shelter Network •
GROOTS International • Habitat International Coalition: Women & Shelter
• Red Mujer Y Habitat De America Latina Y El Caribe • International
Council of Women • Women in Cities International
• Women & Peace Network

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4. *Establishing venture capital, affordable credit and insurance services, and other financial mechanisms to increase low-income women's access to land, housing, markets, and enterprise opportunities and to ensure we receive our fair share of the economic growth and development of our cities.*

We continue these messages at this 21st Session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council. As women we want to stress the importance of looking at urban issues in an integrated and holistic way. We recognize that without safety and security in our homes and in our communities, we cannot address poverty reduction. Without access and ownership of land, we cannot ensure sustained and secure livelihoods. Without strong governance structures that support the participation of women, we cannot build healthy sustainable and caring communities for ourselves, families and communities. Therefore, based on our stated identities, contributions, and struggles, we have identified priority areas which we would like to address in this 21st Session of the Governing Council.

Women's Access to Land, Housing and Secure Tenure:

We stress the importance of adopting and implementing pro-poor and gender specific land management and property administration through enabling policies and financing which enables women to affordably purchase land.

Action:

- Support those women and self-help groups who are already working together to build savings and credit to purchase land through mechanisms such as the Land Access Trust and ensure that this program continues in Asia, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

HIV/AIDS and other health crises:

We stress the importance of recognizing the link between access to land and security of tenure, basic services and security in mitigating the HIV/AIDS crises and other health issues.

Safety and Security:

Partnerships:

We stress the importance of advancing and further developing strategic partnerships within UN-Habitat. We want to ensure that UN-Habitat supports the legitimacy, roles, and work that networks of Women, Local Authorities and Youth have brought to making real advancements on the ground from the bottom up and want to ensure that UN-Habitat promotes new ways of participation, collaboration and partnership.

Action:

- Regular substantive dialogues between local authorities and grassroots women's organizations (that build upon the priorities and processes reflected in the Huairou Commission's Local to Local Dialogue Initiatives).
- Support pilots in at least two countries, led by the Huairou Commission and UN-Habitat to ensure that responses by institutions and agencies such as UN-Habitat are engendered and empowering to communities through monitoring how women's



empowerment and gender equity were addressed in disaster response and reconstruction.

- Support participatory processes in the formulation of laws, policies, programs and budgets that affect community development.
- Support documentation, exchange and transfer of best practices and strategies through activities such as:
 - Women's Safety Awards
 - Peer learning and exchanges
- At the WUF, instead of mainstreaming gender of women's issues, there has always been the women's track, therefore is there a practical proposal we could make at the WUF 4 such as each networking event would have a gender differentiated analysis within each main event and that women are a minimum of 1/3 or 50%.

