



TRADE UNIONS AND WORKERS MAJOR GROUP'S COMMENTS ON THE HIII ZERO DRAFT

Intersession Consultation with Stakeholders, 6 June 2016, New York

Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary of Public Services International,
TUW Major Group Vice-Chair
(3 min video)

INTRO SCREEN: PSI LOGO & MUNICIPAL SECTOR LOGO – CGU LOGO (¿) – GAP logo

SUBTITLE: Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary of Public Services International (PSI), Vice-Chair of the Trade Union and Workers Major Group in the GAP.

ROSA:

I am Rosa Pavanelli, the General Secretary of Public Services International. We are the global trade union federation representing more than 20 million workers in 150 countries and territories. Our members work in social services; health care; local, regional and central government; community and education services; as well as in public utilities such as water, electricity, and waste management.

As a Vice-Chair of the Trade Union and Workers Group in the GAP and on behalf of the Council of Global Unions I bring you today the voice of all city workers worldwide: besides public sector workers, these include building and construction workers; education, transport, services, manufacturing, food and agriculture workers. Altogether we represent **125 million workers in over 160 countries. We are the majority of city dwellers** and it is **we** who build, manage, operate and bring cities to life on a daily basis.

We welcome the Habitat III process and the release of the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda. We appreciate some of its contents, especially the reference to labour and standard specifications in public procurement. However, we believe that there is substantial scope to improve this document notably in terms of ambition, leadership, vision, commitment and concrete recommendations for implementation.

The Zero Draft is particularly weak when it comes **to generate decent work and promote good working conditions, and it lacks practicable policy tools that can effectively tackle widespread urban inequality and socio-economic exclusion.**

This is why we have submitted extensive comments on the Zero Draft that I invite you to review and address very carefully.

But let me just highlight some of the critical issues that need to be urgently redressed in the Zero Draft:

First, you have forgotten **the workers** - our constituency: **they are the big absents of the Zero Draft.** This is a very serious omission that needs to be urgently and fully corrected, as it also undermines the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the New Urban Agenda. All workers face unprecedented challenges in cities today, whether formal, informal or migrant. Precarious work, bogus self-employment, unsafe working conditions, lack of a voice at work, and jobs that don't pay a living wage are major causes of urban poverty.

Then you have also forgotten us, **the trade unions**: we only appear once among a long list of stakeholders to “collaborate” with. Again, this is a major, serious omission that must be redressed. Free trade unions are critical in securing social inclusion, promoting decent work, pushing for progressive and fair taxation systems, as well as for democracy and transparency. Through **social dialogue and collective bargaining with business and government we, the trade unions, make social inclusion happen!**

When it comes to implementation, the Zero Draft does not mention even once the terms **‘labor market institutions’ and ‘active labour market policies’**. These are **the critical levers of social inclusion, and local governments have a central role to play in such policies**.

The Zero Draft should also fully unfold the potential of **fair and progressive taxation systems for sustainable public financing**. For instance, there is no reference to the duty of the private sector - including of multinational corporations – to pay a fair share of taxes to the communities where they operate or source from. We all know by now that corporate tax avoidance is a daily occurrence that deprives central and local governments of the resources they need to provide essential services. Tax Justice is essential if we want to secure sustainable financing for the New Urban Agenda.

The Zero Draft also presents some potentially dangerous proposals that would work at odds with the vision of a fair, inclusive New Urban Agenda:

We were shocked to hear a speaker in a recent Habitat III event say that **‘cities should be like corporations’**. There should be no ‘corporate’ benchmarking of the ‘performance’ of cities. Each city is unique and should not be played against each other on business-based efficiency criteria. Cities are for people and must answer to **public interest** criteria. The disastrous social, economic and environmental consequences on cities and their people of zero-public deficit approaches and austerity-embracing dogmatism are visible to all.

Finally, but far from least: twenty years ago Habitat II recommended the mobilization of private funding to bridge the infrastructure and financing gap for urban development. This recommendation resulted in an overreliance on ‘public-private partnerships’ (PPPs). Twenty years on, the World Bank admitted to ‘an irrational exuberance’ in the hope that the private sector would finance public services. Many dramatic failures in water and sanitation, in electricity, in health care and education have led to a wave of remunicipalizations. Habitat III must not repeat the same false hopes that corporate finance and management will solve the problems of finance and governance. **There is no evidence that PPPs are more efficient than direct public sector service provision** and we insist that the New Urban Agenda includes references to **the public options such as remunicipalization, public-public partnerships, public investment and inter-municipal cooperation that are increasingly the preferred choice of cities and communities that have been ravaged by the woes of privatization**.

We, the trade unions, and our allies will continue to contribute to the debate and will closely monitor and scrutinize the concrete outcomes of the New Urban Agenda for urban workers, their families and their communities. We will continue to relentlessly call and campaign for decent jobs, social inclusion, tax justice and universal access to public services, without which fair and inclusive cities for all will never become a reality.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a good continuation of the work on the New Urban Agenda. See you in Quito!