

Ten key points

For fair cities and for an inclusive New Urban Agenda

PSI's POSITION ON HABITAT III

About Public Services International

Public Services International (PSI) is the Global Trade Union Federation bringing together more than 20 million workers, represented by 659 unions in 152 countries and territories. We are dedicated to promoting quality public services in every part of the world. Our members, two-thirds of whom are women, work in social services, health care, municipal and community services, central government, and public utilities such as water, electricity and solid waste. PSI is a member of the Trade Union and Workers UN Major Group and of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) of Habitat III. As such, the PSI constituency has a major direct stake in Habitat III and has key messages to deliver.

About these key 10 points

The 10 key points on the following pages represent PSI's priorities for a New Urban Agenda and are based on the following fundamental principles:

- *The generation of decent work opportunities for all as a precondition to urban socio-economic inclusion and local economic development;*
- *Universal access and public investment in essential public services such as water, energy, health care, transportation, waste management, social services, education etc.;*
- *The protection of public spaces and commons from privatization and gentrification;*
- *The inclusion of labour and environmental clauses in public procurement and public contract transparency and disclosure;*
- *The empowerment of local government;*
- *Decent working and living conditions and capacity-building for public sector and municipal workers who will have to implement the New Urban Agenda;*
- *An integrated approach to fight corruption;*
- *Tax justice for local governments and communities;*
- *The right to housing for all;*
- *The need for national governments to secure policy coherence between an inclusive New Urban Agenda and their tax and trade policies.*

PSI urges national governments, local governments, the United Nations, workers, trade union federations and confederations and all stakeholders involved in the process of shaping and building the cities of the future to advocate and reflect these 10 points in the outcome text of the Habitat III process and to uphold them throughout its implementation.

1) Creating decent employment opportunities for all workers in cities and local communities must be at the heart of the New Urban Agenda

If city government and urban economic development programmes are to deliver inclusion, socio-economic integration and sustainable livelihoods, these programmes must be rooted in Decent Work¹ and must place workers at their heart. They must have a special focus on integrating potentially vulnerable workers, including women, young, elderly, informal, precarious and low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, the working poor, migrant workers, indigenous communities and LGBT groups.

Working people are the actors who build the cities and keep them running, and to do so they need empowerment, rights, protection and capacity-building through decent working conditions. Every urban dweller over the minimum age for employment is a worker or a potential worker, and it is only by creating decent employment opportunities at a local level that national and local governments can sustainably empower urban populations, unleashing their potential to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and bridge the urban inequality gap, while contributing to local economic development, essential public services and social protection systems. The decent work deficit is also a key factor behind the failure of many urban policies and real estate developments, as people cannot afford to live in cities where they cannot make a living and are therefore pushed into low-income segregated suburbs and slums. Implementing the ILO's Decent Work Agenda at a local and urban level means creating employment opportunities for all urban workers through active labour market policies and improving existing working conditions, especially of poor and informal economy workers. These employment opportunities must respect fundamental human and labour rights and guarantee:

- Equal treatment and non-discrimination at work;
- Adequate occupational health and safety standards (OSH);
- Universal access to social protection;
- Effective measures to facilitate the transition from informal to formal employment;
- Lifelong access to education, vocational training and skills development opportunities;
- A living wage and sustainable livelihoods.

2) Essential services and infrastructure must be public, accessible to all and democratically accountable to local communities

Universal access to essential public services has a major impact on equality among urban populations and is inextricably linked to the respect of human rights. These public services are the foundation blocks of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)². Essential public services include: water, affordable energy, sanitation, waste management, health care, education, social services (e.g. child and elderly care, social housing), public security (municipal police), emergency services (firefighters, emergency medical responders), culture services (e.g. libraries, museums), public spaces (e.g. parks)

¹ According to the International Labour Organization, decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.' The concept of decent work has its roots in the fundamental ILO conventions and rests four pillars that are: (1) standards and rights, (2) employment creation and enterprise development, (3) social protection and (4) social dialogue. As per the definition of the International Labour Organization (ILO) decent work is such as long as it fulfils the 8 fundamental ILO core Conventions that are: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

² UN SDGs page <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

and natural resource management. The role of accessible, affordable quality public services is paramount for building inclusive, sustainable cities and for reducing inequality in urban settings.

These essential public services must be publicly owned. When market dynamics and profit maximisation govern the provision of essential public services, the social and environmental sustainability objectives that public institutions have a duty and a mandate to pursue are distorted and are no longer achievable. Public resources and commons become endangered, transparency and democratic civic scrutiny are weakened and the overall economic and social costs to the community rise. There is no evidence that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector, in fact the public sector is as efficient or more so. This is found in extensive, global literature reviews of economic studies and from experience. It is a consistent finding for any form of privatization; be it a one-off sale of assets, outsourcing or concession or public-private partnerships (PPPs)³. Effective alternatives to public-private partnerships (PPPs) include remunicipalization, public-public partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation.

3) The New Urban Agenda must include provisions to protect urban public space, land and natural resources and to develop efficient, sustainable transportation systems

Just like public services and commons, the preservation, accessibility and protection of public space in urban settings are major factors for equality among urban populations and are inextricably linked to the enjoyment of human rights and is a prerequisite to inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities, as well as a prerequisite for participatory democracy and civic empowerment. Only by accessing adequate, safe, clean and properly equipped public spaces can people exercise their human rights to freedom of assembly and expression and their right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment. Public space is also key to local development and employment, as it is vital for access and transportation and for economic activities such as open markets, street vending and waste-picking that are major livelihood providers for vulnerable workers such women and those in the informal economy. The presence of adequate urban public space is also a major factor for pre-empting the social tensions and security issues that go with social segregation, market-led gentrification, social marginalisation and the proliferation of urban ghettos and slums.

Access to public urban land for participative urban agriculture is also proving critical for building inclusive, sustainable cities and for ensuring the access to food in urban settings. Urban heritage and cultural resources must be protected from privatization and preserved for future generations through adequate policies, while their accessibility must be maintained as they are a key vehicle for social inclusion and participation. The presence of a green, sustainable, accessible and shared transportation system is a prerequisite to secure the socio-economic connectivity and cultural vibrancy typical of inclusive urban public spaces, while contributing to air quality, safety, employment and active lifestyles.

The New Urban Agenda can achieve this by:

- Halting the privatization and commercialization of public space and commons (e.g. the enclosure of public space by private estate developers or the charge of a private fee to access a park) through appropriate legal frameworks;
- Requiring that local and municipal authorities provide for and invest in adequate, fairly distributed, safe public space for all in their urban planning, including appropriately separate, well-organized access for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and commercial deliveries;

³ PSIRU (2014) *Public and private sector efficiency. A briefing for the EPSU Congress, May 2014* www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/PSIRU_efficiency.pdf; Hall, D. *Why Public-Private Partnerships don't Work. The many advantages of the public alternative.* PSIRU 2015 http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/rapport_eng_56pages_a4_lr.pdf;

Jomo KS, Chowdhury A., Sharma K., Platz D. *Public-Private Partnerships and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Fit for purpose?* UN DESA Working Paper No. 148 ST/ESA/2016/DWP/148, February 2016 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2288desaworkingpaper148.pdf>

- Encourage, promote and invest in participative, gender-responsive approaches for the identification, use and upgrading of public spaces (e.g. slum upgrading, urban food gardens and allotments).
- Investing and promoting green, sustainable, safe, gender-responsive and shared public transportation systems.

4) Public procurement in the New Urban Agenda must be socially and environmentally responsible and accountable

Local governments and municipalities are some of the major clients of the construction industry and can therefore be powerful change agents for progressive changes towards fair, inclusive cities. The public sector has an enormous potential to leverage its urban building and infrastructure development policies and purchasing power to demand the respect of social, labour and environmental standards from its builders and suppliers, as well as for the promotion of decent work and sustainable local sourcing practices.

Public procurement in the New Urban Agenda must aim at achieving social, environmental and local economic development objectives, and not focus solely on cost considerations. Local governments and municipalities must use their purchasing power to lay down social conditions and labour clauses in their procurement policies, in line with ILO Convention 94⁴, that include: explicit references to equal treatment and conditions for all workers on building sites regardless of their origin and status; mandatory formal employment arrangements; health and safety standards and skills; as well as a chain of liability down the whole subcontracting process. The details of public contracts should be made public and accessible to all in order to allow for scrutiny and proper evaluation. Several municipalities have already adopted such good practices⁵ that can serve as a reference for the New Urban Agenda.

5) Local governments must be acknowledged and empowered for the realization of an inclusive New Urban Agenda

Local governments are at the forefront of the introduction and implementation of inclusive, innovative local and urban policies, and of implementing global frameworks such as the Sendai Protocol on Disaster Preparedness, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda. It is therefore essential to ensure the political, fiscal and administrative empowerment of cities, municipalities, regions and other local government entities as the key players at the forefront of creating an inclusive, sustainable urban development and effective urban risk and crisis management systems.

Local authorities also play a critical role for all issues related to social inclusion, decent job creation, worker rights and working conditions, and are crucial actors for facilitating the inclusion of informal economy workers into the formal economy. Local governments therefore need to be empowered to implement the Decent Work agenda at a local level, including when it comes to labour inspection, local active labour market policies and worker participation in local democracy and decision-making. Additionally, municipalities must not suffer from unfunded mandates. Subsidiarity must be accompanied by adequate and sustainable funding that is not reliant on the vagaries of the political cycle.

⁴ [ILO Convention concerning Labour Clauses in Public Contracts, 1949 \(No. 94\)](#)

⁵ An example are the ICLEI's Respiro Guidelines for Responsible Procurement in Construction <http://www.respiro-project.eu/>

6) Public sector and municipal workers need decent working and living conditions, as well as skills and capacity-building, to implement the New Urban Agenda

Local governments are not abstract entities: they are made up of working people, and only skilled, well-trained local government and municipal staff, with decent working and living conditions and with access to adequate resources, can sustainably deliver quality public services to the communities they serve and successfully confront the many challenges posed by rapid urbanization. While elected local government representatives change with political cycles, professional local public servants often stay on and their work is critical to secure continuity, coherence and long-term sustainability of urban policy implementation. It is therefore essential that the New Urban Agenda protects and promotes the right of local government workers to organize and bargain collectively⁶ (in line with [ILO C. 151 on Employment Relations in the Public Service](#)), to be free from the threat of unfair dismissal, and supports measures to build their capacity and promote the professionalization, so that local government workers can develop and implement innovative, constructive solutions to make cities socially inclusive, sustainable and safe.

7) An integrated approach to corruption is needed for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Coherent, effective, enforceable transparency and accountability regulations and measures must be put into place, addressing all actors and stakeholders, to prevent and halt corruption and unethical practices in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, both at national and at local level, including in public procurement procedures whose details and contracts should be public and accessible to all to enable transparency, accountability and proper evaluation. This must include adequate measures for proportional and dissuasive sanctions, public seizure of profits and gains attained through corruption and unethical practices and the protection of whistle-blowers, their families and communities from harm and retaliation.

8) Sustainable financing for the New Urban Agenda involves tax justice for local communities

The New Urban Agenda requires sustainable public financing that encompasses the payment of a fair share of taxes by the private sector - including multinational corporations (MNCs) operating or sourcing within the jurisdiction of competent local and regional governments - who must pay taxes to the communities where they operate and generate profits. Local government authorities must be involved in tax policy, so that they can ensure balanced agreements with domestic and global business and investors and have the right to a direct say on setting fair returns for local communities in terms of tax revenues, local decent work creation, clean technology transfer, profit reinvestment, fair pricing for commodities, non-abusive dispute settlement clauses and protection of public services to the population.

9) The global social housing shortage must be urgently addressed with equitable solutions that uphold the right to housing

When gentrification and real estate speculation, poor social housing and integration policies and the privatization and commercialization of public spaces in urban settings match with socio-economic exclusion and forced evictions, they create an explosive mix that pushes vulnerable communities to

⁶ As per the core ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

the margins of cities and generates urban ghettos and slums. These socially-segregated, informal settlements reproduce socio-economic inequality, creating a vicious circle of informal employment or work in the informal economy perpetuating inter-generational poverty, illiteracy and lack of skills and education and increasing threats to public health and security which become hard to break. Slums are also the urban areas that are worse hit by disaster and extreme climate events. Often it is the same workers who build and serve cities on a daily basis (e.g. waste collectors, builders, bus drivers, teachers, nurses, etc.) who cannot afford to live close to their workplace and have to commute long hours at high cost.

Public housing deficits and unaddressed socio-economic issues related to informal settlements are a major threat to fair cities and to an inclusive New Urban Agenda. What is needed is an urgent, equitable, comprehensive solution that upholds to right to housing and includes the effective regulation of the housing market and equitable land reform, adequate, sustainable social housing for low-income dwellers and other vulnerable groups, as well as a halt to forced evictions. A coordinated effort is necessary to mobilize national, regional and local governments' resources and identify sustainable solutions, including credit and building cooperatives, for financing the development of adequate, affordable housing and to promote participatory slum upgrading. The employment of sustainable, environmentally disposable and renewable local materials, together with energy-efficient technology, must be encouraged for upgrading existing social housing and in any new such compounds, to reduce carbon emission and enhance the environmental friendliness in production and disposal processes.

10) National governments play a critical role in setting an enabling regulatory framework and in ensuring policy coherence for fair cities and the implementation of an inclusive New Urban Agenda

National governments have a major role and responsibility to ensure that local governments and communities are enabled and empowered to build fair cities and to successfully implement an inclusive New Urban Agenda, rooted in the generation of decent employment opportunities for all. They can create an enabling environment for local governments to thrive by implementing a domestic policy framework based on the following principles:

- Decentralization to local government in policy areas in which local populations have a direct stake and should have an opportunity to shape through participatory democratic processes.
- Subsidiarity in tax collection to fund local infrastructures and public services, so that local growth and economic development is reinvested in the local economy.
- National frameworks for the regulation of labour relations in the public sector, based on decent work and on ILO Convention 151, and supportive of good labour relations' practices at a local government level.
- Policy coherence, supportive and collaborative approaches with local government, especially concerning common, systemic challenges (e.g. migration, environmental protection, climate change, disasters).

National governments also have a responsibility to ensure policy coherence between the New Urban Agenda and the global tax and trade policy framework by:

- Supporting the initiative for the reform of the international taxation⁷ system towards an equitable and comprehensive global tax cooperation system to redress the complex financial engineering and tax avoidance schemes designed by MNEs and international investors that starves local and national government of essential resources to service their communities.

⁷ [2015 Declaration of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation \(ICRICT\)](#)

- Opting out of the negotiations of trade agreements that:
 - constrain national and local government sovereignty and regulatory powers in favour of business and corporations;
 - allow foreign corporations to challenge local government regulations and actions by providing the rights to sue for damages in areas such as zoning, liquor licencing, waste disposal and others; and
 - limit their ability to invest in public services, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA). These trade agreements jeopardize sustainable development efforts as, through their built-in investment-state dispute settlement mechanisms, they limit the ability of national and local policy-makers to adopt or revise decisions aimed at pursuing non-profit objectives such as social and environmental goals in the interest of their communities.

For more information and resources:

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