



# Habitat International Coalition

## General Assembly 2005

Hotel Coral Tower, Porto Alegre  
Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2005

### 1. Revision of the Quorum

88 persons were present at the General Assembly. 30 of them were voting delegates from HIC members having paid updated dues (2004/2005). Representatives of 5 regions (Latin America, Anglophone Africa, Asia, North America and Europe) and of 2 networks (HLRN and WAS); and 9 of NO-member representatives. (See list in Annex 1.) The Assembly began at 10 o'clock. Simultaneous translation was available to work in Portuguese, Spanish and English.

### 2. Revision and approval of the Agenda

Explanation of the proposed agenda, ground rules of the meeting, facilitators and time keeper (Murielle Mignot), clarification of procedures for voting and eligible voters by Joseph Schechla (JS). The agenda is approved with an amendment to include as item the HLRN report.

**Decision 1:** The agenda is approved (unanimous)

### 3. President welcomed the Assembly.

(Annex 2)

### 4. Approval of the Minutes of the previous General Assembly, Barcelona, September 2004.

*Context information given by Pedro Franco*

- In Barcelona, before the General Assembly, there was an historical Board meeting with the participation of the members, alternates, regional focal points and networks coordination; this meeting defined the global approach on base of unity that Enrique Ortiz presented: mutual support and respect to all.
- Summarized the main points of these minutes (Annex 3)

*Comments of the Assembly*

- Evaniza Rodrigues. Point 9, first paragraph has to be changed: the reference is the government of the State and not of the city.
- Three persons say there was not enough time to read the document before the Assembly and therefore cannot vote for or against its approval.
- Cesare Ottolini asked for explanations about the notice of a Board meeting during WSF 2005.
- Paul Maquet asked to include the annex with document presented to the GA in Barcelona.

Ana Sugranyes explains that the minutes of the General Assembly were available at HIC website since December 2004 and have been distributed one hour previous to the meeting, in English and Spanish. There was no Board meeting during WSF 2005, since there were no resources to have Board members in Porto Alegre.

**Decision 2** (15 votes, 9 abstention): Approval of the Minutes of the previous General Assembly, Barcelona, September 2004.

**Note:** It took 20 minutes to the Assembly to cover these 4 first points of the agenda.

## 5. Campaigns Reports and Proposals

### 5.1 International Housing Rights Day

Michael Kane (NAHT) highlighted the initiative of the “Housing Rights Day” as a coordinated oppositional day, coinciding with Habitat Day, to support people struggles and to engage people in their own cities and communities in support of housing rights in their own contexts.

HIC members presented short reports on activities for 2004 Housing Rights Day oppositional demonstrations:

- Privatisation of social housing, budget cuts, and tenants in USA, United Kingdom, Australia (M. Kane, NAHT).
- Rally and demands against massive evictions in India (Rajeev John George, INFHR).
- Peasant situation in Egypt (Karam Saber, Land Center for Human Rights).
- Situation of human rights and land rights in Yemen (Amal Basha, Sisters Arab Forum).
- Land occupations in Palestine (~~Pasem Dou Dayyeh~~, Qasem Abu Dayyeh, Land Research Center).
- Mobilization of the Kenya grassroots Network to **pressure** the government to release a report on illegal and irregular allocation of land in Kenya (Zarina Ishani, Mazingira Institute).
- In Brazil, different debates and negotiations: i) the set up of the Ministry of the Cities; ii) Fund for the Popular Housing Right; iii) common agenda for the National Urban Reform (Dito Roberto Barbosa, União Nacional por Moradia Popular).
- In Peru, the “Committee Campaign for Adequate Housing for All” with the preparation of a set of laws: i) access to land, ii) implementation of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing report; and iii) fund for people-centred housing (Carlos Escalante, CENCA).
- In the Dominican Republic, different events and debates with the state prevailed the eviction of the **neighbourhood** Isabelita (Pedro Franco, CUP).
- In Mexico a 3 days rally in front of the Senate was to promote a debate on the Housing Law. For the first time, the government gave a Social Production of Habitat award, which has been won by an indigenous group who rehabilitated a flat building downtown. And two forums on the Housing Law and Housing Policy.
- In Egypt, HLRN made a training in 2003 and in 2004 in cooperation with ECHR jointly made an event on land rights and issued a paper of the housing conditions in the region
- In **Lebanon**, MIRSED ~~did~~ **organized** a public event focusing on displaced people due to the reconstruction of the city.
- In the MENA region, Habitat Day provides an opportunity to ~~raising~~ **raise** issues of the human right to land (Joseph Schechla).

Michael Kane promoted a record of activities to be published **at** the website participation this year, identifying the goals, protests, issues in each country. Fighting for housing rights at global level and attracting media.

**Decision 2:** (unanimous) All the participants support the follow-up of the international campaign for the Housing, Land and City Rights Day.

### 5.2 Charter to the Right to the City

Evaniza Rodrigues (União de Moradia, Brazil) explained: January 28th, HIC participated at the Workshop of the World Charter of the Rights to the City, as forum to implement the charter, which is the output of the initiative of many organizations since FSM 1, in 2001; at the same time, it is a tool to support networking on defence of human rights.

Now there is a document to work on; all the organisations are invited to diffuse the Charter and to use it fighting against local and national governments or multilateral organisations for the full implementation of human rights. HIC has been part of the process since 2001. But still more commitment is asked inside HIC and its different bodies to disseminate the Charter especially to the urban communities to give them the opportunity to apply a common tool.

HIC members presented comments and suggestions:

- Orlando **do Santos** (FASE, Brazil). Proposal of three strategies to disseminate the Charter: i) to the members and allies in the world, especially to Africa and Asia; that for the role of HIC is important; ii) subscription of the Charter by local and national authorities, with HIC helping to get the signatures; iii) lobby at UN level for the official recognition of the Charter. Proposal too to have the Charter as main theme for the 2005 International Housing and Land Rights Day.

- Joe Schechla (HLRN): HIC has been involved in the development of the Charter since 2003. HLRN made a translation to Arabic **was done**; and the same for the new version, although some technical issues are to be sort out. The challenge: how to make it truly a World Charter, including regions as Africa, Central Asia or MENA?
- Nelson Saule (Polis). Proposal of a workshop, during 2005 with different HIC members to discuss contents and common strategy to support the implementation of the Charter.
- Marcelo Nowersztern (AITEC) insisted the Charter is still a “proposition **proposal**” in process; this was not clear at the WSF workshop on January 28th.
- Indu Prakashsingh, AAA/AAI, congratulated efforts to promote this Charter. The challenge is not only to push governments to sign it, but to survey how the rights included in the charter are being implemented.
- Pichi Meissegeier (SEDECA). It is difficult to find a common language as well for UN, IDB as for so many other involved sectors. Because of the hypocrisy of the IDB way of action, proposes to define a new lobby strategy to present alternatives.
- Guillermo Villas (FEDEVI) challenged the capacity of the Charter to be fully useful and not to remain as one of the so many other tools that create new forms of marginalisation **marginalization**.
- Juliet Bannoura ~~Bannowa~~ **Bannoura** (ARIJ, Palestine) asked about the involvement of the UN organizations in the Charter, how they are working to promote this charter. We have to be cautious not to be seen as naive.
- Evaniza Rodrigues (União) answered the different questions raised from the floor. i) The Charter had to be translated not only to different languages but to other cultural contexts. ii) The Charter is still in an elaboration phase; in 2004 in Barcelona, HIC agreed to edit the different contributions, and to propose an issuance strategy of this stage of the Charter after 4 years work.

**Decision 3:** (unanimous) HIC will convoke the 2005 International Housing and Land Rights Day with the reference of “Defending the Right to the City”, to disseminate the Charter and to adapt it to the diversity of contexts.

### 5.3 Housing Rights

Joseph Schechla presented how the Housing and Land Rights Network mainstreams housing and land rights in the Coalition, developing and promoting the definition, the contents, the legal instruments of the right and to identify and elaborate the nature of State obligations. Emphasising how important land is for community and people, although the land right doesn't exist.

HIC, and HLRN, is a learning institution and institutionalises the lessons that come from members' experiences. The administrative office is a strategy kitchen that returns strategies and methods to the members so they know how to promote, defend and fulfil their human right to land. The Toolkit and other publications, encouraging members to use them. Training in different regions with many stakeholders, linking concepts and other initiatives, as for example the consultations, developing the skills of HIC members to make their cases to the UN system by reviewing the treaty body and the lobbying mechanisms, bringing the human rights to housing and land to the ground.

Issam Khoudry (ETCC, Syria). Reported to HIC of more than 300 people made homeless in Damascus after the demolishment of houses. Asks about what can HIC do in such cases.

Joseph Schechla: There are two kind of actions: short or long term action. The Urgent Action System can be used as a tool to get solidarity from other members and to exercise a pressure on governments and authorities. On a long-term strategy, it will help to present information to multilateral and treaty bodies, taking information of the ground especially in cases people don't have freedom to organize or speak in their own names, and HIC can help in these cases. We should not duplicate but reinforce local peoples' work, so we will respond to your cases and encourage you to take your cases to the coordination office.

### 5.4 Social Production of Habitat

Lorena Zarate (HIC-AL, Focal Point). PSH conveys the production and management of housing, neighbourhood and citizenship as part of the human rights; also a change in housing policies towards the full recognition of the people-centred concept. HIC-AL has been coordinating a SPH project since 2001. After 2003, the project took a worldwide approach, with support of the German agency InWEnt to facilitate exchanges, to empower new

propositions in Africa (Anglophone and Francophone), in Middle East and North Africa, in Asia and Latin America. For the moment, 45 have been documented in 13 Latin American countries; 80 worldwide cases.

Ana Sugranyes (HIC-GS). The InWEnt project ends in 2005. At the end of April, we'll have a first global document. From May to August, HIC Regions and Networks will have the opportunity to improve this first document. Between September 1st and 11<sup>th</sup>, besides the annual HIC activities, a global SPH workshop will take place to bring together the regional and thematic inputs. In November, during Cities Alliance Steering Committee, InWEnt proposes to have a dialogue with HIC proposals. The SPH theme will go on in the Coalition, with a next step toward Vancouver 2006.

HIC members presented comments and suggestions:

- Leonardo Pessina (CAAP, Brazil). From self-management and cooperative approach, there are needs of policies to support people's processes. Proposal of a HIC working group on Social Production of Habitat.
- Daniel Díaz (COPEVI, Mexico). SPH conveys not only the production of dwellings and settlements; it includes improvement strategies of the local environment. Therefore it conveys also citizen's organisation, social integration, participation, justice and the set up of livelihood's criteria, which should not be imposed by the authorities.
- Marta Baima (SEHAS, Argentina). Because of the division which take place in Cordoba, a forum for articulation of social integration and excluded sectors work has been set up with BID funds, creating alliances between the various social sectors, in order to analyse conditions and raise proposals.
- Nestor Jeifetz (MOI, Argentina). SPH project enables regional articulation between ONGs, social organizations and academics. A convergence of organizational practices and proposals, with autonomy but permitting political construction perspectives.
- Guillermo Villas (Fedevi, Argentina), Law proposals y regulations to get access to housing in condition of economical crisis, generating work and sustainable alternatives, politics of solidarity and self-building projects. They require solidarity support to HIC and others international organizations.
- Carlos Escalante (Cenca y Comité de Campaña para una Vivienda Digna para Todos y Todas, Perú). A document about SPH has been presented to the Congress in Peru, with proposals of financial, technical, and capacities development tools. Another priority point: the strengthening of ways to support social production. Process.
- Juliet Bannoura (ARIJ, Palestine) After the Intifada, the project "House for the culture" or "House Garden", to implement the peoples right to land, to produce food and water at the time of military occupancy and to improve the environment.
- Enrique Ortiz (HIC President). The theme of SPH is the clearest reflection of the integration which occurs in HIC: People fight, not to have the right to housing or to law, but to have a house for its children, its family, in order to survive. The general tendency to policies to work for the private sector and not to the social producers, spontaneous or organized. The exchanges supply approaches between the regions, which have their own approach to these subjects. It deals with housing production as well as with neighbourhoods upgrading.

## 5.5 Fighting Privatisation of Social Housing

Michael Kane (NATH). A global trend in the last decade is to privatise social housing to market raised housing, displacing people and ultimately making them homeless. HIC had an initiative to promote a task force in this issue. The first meeting of this task force was held in London: assistants described efforts in each country, the importance of fighting together against globalisation trends, and relations with public utilities. There is a need to find a strategy at the global level.

- German Lomtev and Elena Chernikova (Russian Housing Federation). There are common problems to be shared in the Coalition. Since capitalist era, suggestions was made to people to become owners of their flats, but now the big problem is how to maintain privatised housing stock with owners and tenants. We think that the problems we are facing today, we'll face them tomorrow. People from different regions of Russia went to London to discuss understandings about privatisation, associations and housing rights and utilities.
- Ana Sugranyes (HIC-GS). Privatisation is not only an issue in the North. Housing policies are defined on base of the immediate business profits. The approach is to be shared North-South and East-West.
- Leonardo Pessina (CAAP, Brazil). Housing and services privatisation has to be analysed from the SPH approach. It is hard issue in the South. In Uruguay a Constitutional reform "water for all" has been approved to prevail privatisation of this essential public service.

- Lorena Zárate (HIC-AL). Water, housing and habitat are to be linked. In Mexico, March 2006, besides the official conference, a Water Social Forum will be held. There's a proposal for HIC to prepare a global document about water seen from the SPH approach.
- Marcelo Nowersztern (AITEC, France). Housing privatisation is not only an issue of the neo-liberal policies, which can aggravate the housing privatisation. It is a capitalistic issue. In France, a left orientated government privatised the social housing.

**Decision 4:** (unanimous) General agreement about this global issue. Task force will make the links between housing and water privatisation. Will work also on the more specific urban housing problem in European and North American countries. All the members are asked to post reports at the website that the Berlin Tenants Union has created for this purpose. Create a page within HIC website devoted to these struggles to keep this debate. And participation at the Russian conference in August to advance this issue.

## 5.6 HIC Representation at:

Davinder Lamba (Mazingira Institute). Every year there are UN events relevant to the work of HIC, i.e. Governing session of UN-Environment Program (February in Nairobi), Commission on Human Rights (61st session), Governing Council the UN-HABITAT (April in Nairobi), Commission on Sustainable Development (13<sup>th</sup> session in Geneva), Beijing+10 in New York, Summit of MDG+5 in New York; for 2006, i.e. Conference of Water in Mexico and World Forum III in Vancouver.

Joseph Schechla, the CHR is a political body of UN. HLRN has been the face of HIC at the Commission, with some achievements as the political recognition of the legal right to housing and that eviction is gross violation of human rights. There has also been a close work with Special Rapporteurs, who are the factual neutral bodies related to the Commission. There is an announcement to send reports to the Commission up to the 11<sup>th</sup> February. For more information: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

Ana Sugranyes (HIC-GS). Since November 2004, HIC prepares statements for the next session of CSD on human settlements, water and sanitation themes. All the members are invited to participate. See in-depth debates at [www.hic-net.org](http://www.hic-net.org)

## 5.7 General Secretary Report

Ana Sugranyes (HIC-GS). HIC participated to the WSF International Council meeting on January 24th and 25th. The most important decisions: Sponsor regional WSF's in 2006 simultaneously (during Davos EF) on different continents, to be followed by a global WSF in Africa in 2007. During its next session in The Netherlands at the end of March 2005, on base of the proposals presented by the members, the IC will decide the different places for WSF 2006 and the African one for 2007. During this same session, the IC will begin to define criteria to evaluate the impacts of centralised and decentralised versions of the Forum, to analyse its future.

About the General Secretariat (Annex 5):

- For a year, HIC membership is on-line. Important to use this tool to empower HIC membership
- Next HIC global events, with a workshop on People-centred production and management of housing and human settlements, with support of HIC-InWEnt project, with training for the Board members and a Board meeting, to be held in early September in Africa, preferably in Cairo, subject to consultation and agreement by HIC members there, with a fallback in Nairobi if they say no. With InWEnt support Board members and some Regional and Thematic responsible are invited to participate.
- Joseph Schechla. Offer of Internet server/provider, available for all HIC members at a very low cost. Contact [yasser@hic-mena.org](mailto:yasser@hic-mena.org)

## 6. Social Movements

- Pedro Franco (CUP, Dominican Republic). In Barcelona, a proposal was made to extend the social movements representation at the HIC Board and candidate's nomination remained opened. Now, the proposal is made to the members to present representatives within two month.
- Evaniza Rodrigues (União de Moradia, Brasil). There are now five social movements representatives at HIC Board, and another one finished his period at the end of 2004. There is a lack of criteria to extend the social movements representation at the HIC Board, as for instance with candidates of at least two different regions.
- Cesare Ottolini (UI, Italy). It seems that everybody agrees in choosing two representatives of the urban social movements. In former elections, no candidates were presented, and where there has been a representative at

HIC Board, he nearly did not participate. It might be that the social movement do not feel integrated in HIC. There is a problem with the nature of Habitat Coalition. It is a Coalition where there appears to be different types of organizations. But in reality, this space does not exist. My proposal is to deep the reflexion, this cannot be solved in two month. There is a point, which says that it is not possible that a big association of habitants has a single vote, just as a small office of professional and friends. I propose that we defer this decision.

- Guillermo Villas (Fedevi, Argentina). Call to meditation, because some social organizations (we are in between) that feel neglected and left alone. We think that HIC should respect and support the autonomy of the people. Somewhere, this is a repetition of what is so questioned and so criticized. The organizations have political autonomy, social, scientific and technical support to serve the people free organizations. There are differences of idiosyncrasy, times, life styles and so that the differences can coexist, we requested solidarity to share the daily fights.
- Dito Fernandes (União de Moradia, Brasil) For HIC, popular social movements representation is important. And for us, as popular social movements, SPH is important. Some members propose to have a social movements meeting in Lima at mid 2005 to discuss the subjects of self-management and SPH with mutual support and collective property. We feel we are represented in HIC, we feel part of the subjects discussed here. It is important that new representatives of other regions have the possibility to join the proposals. The decisions should be taken quickly.
- Enrique Ortiz (HIC President). We had and still have representatives of social movements at the Board, through elections: with us Pedro, Cesare, Evaniza y Michael are present. We look forward an additional space to share and support important social processes in order to complement the Coalition wealth. We are actually inviting two other persons coming from social movements to strengthen the social movements participation in the Board.

Motion A: There is a two-month term to receive candidate's proposals to extend social movements participation at HIC Board (23 votes).

Motion B: Postpone the debate and discuss about it another occasion (4 votes, 1 abstention).

**Decision 4:** There is a two-month term to receive candidate's proposals to extend social movements participation at HIC Board

## 7. Other

Peter Shimokawa (ACHR, LOCOA, Japan). There are more than 50.000 homeless in Japan due to economic recession and loss of job, which are living in public space. Government officials don't know housing and land rights and commitments. Evictions are happening now, leaving homeless many people. Ask for support and letters of protest.

Murielle Mignot (HLRN). There's a partnership HIC partners as Amnesty International and Social Watch in relation with the social responsibility of business on human rights and UN norms, with issues related with privatisation of water and other topics. See reports at [www.escr-net.org](http://www.escr-net.org). Important to have comments.

## 8. Date and place of the next General Assembly

There are no elements to define the place and date of the next General Assembly. The decision should be taken by the Board to analyse the possibility of an Assembly or Forum during HIC global events, which should take place the first week of September in Cairo or Nairobi, members meeting to approve the Coalition financial statements. The 2006 General Assembly could occur with the WUF III, Vancouver, as there will not be 2006 WSF in a unique place. HIC members will be informed opportunely

## 11. Closure (14:00 PM)

### Annexes

- Annex 1: List of participants
- Annex 2: Edited version of Enrique speech
- Annex 3: Minutes of the previous General Assembly, Barcelona, January 2004
- Annex 4: Report HLRN, January 2005
- Annex 5: Progress Report by HIC General Secretary and Plan 2005, Ana Sugranyes
- Annex 6: Report initiative about privatisation of housing and utilities (HIC Europe)