

Habitat International Coalition (HIC)

General Assembly Minutes

Naples, Italy, September 2, 2012



The second part of the 2012 HIC General Assembly meeting took place in Naples, Italy on September 2, 2012 (the first part took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012), before the Urban Social Forum 2 and World Urban Forum 6.



1. Welcome by HIC President, Lorena Zárate

Today are gathered people from around the world who are all fighting the same struggles and who are all affected by the same problems. We were brought to Naples for the Urban Social Forum which is particularly important because of the current crisis in Europe. We are also here to participate in the World Urban Forum (WUF) as we do every two years, and we should discuss what our presence should be in this forum. UN-Habitat and its WUF have become radically more neoliberal in their focus in recent years, and the WUF is now a fair for businesses that are looking to invest in urban projects. This focus is very far-removed from HIC's objectives and we must discuss HIC's strategy and its relation to these forums.

2. Presentation of members

There were 28 participants in the General Assembly, and 6 interpreters.

The participants at the Assembly were (in alphabetical order): Yasser Abdel Qader (**YA**), Marie Bailloux (**MB**), Jordi Borja (**JB**), Shelley Buckingham (**SB**), Miquel Carrillo (**MC**), Shivani Chaudhry (**SC**), Ada Colau (**AC**), Jennifer Duyne (**JD**), Silvia Emanuelli (**SE**), Rigoberto Fabelo (**RF**), Claudia Gatti (**CGa**), Ramiro García (**RG**), Carmen Gonzalez (**CGo**), Mickael Kane (**MK**), Rajaa Kassab (**RK**), Miloon Kothary (**MK**), Davinder Lamba (**DL**), Paul Maquet (**PM**), Charlotte Mathivet (**CM**), Alfredo Rodriguez (**AR**), Joseph Schechla (**JS**), Rita Silva (**RS**), Peter Sliits (**PS**), Ana Sugranyes (**AS**), Klaus Teschner (**KT**), Marina Thia (**MT**), Pascale Thys (**PT**), Knut Unger (**KU**), Vanesa Valiño (**VV**), Pedro Vazquez (**PV**), Rabie Wahba (**RW**), Lorena Zarate (**LZ**).

HIC members with the right to vote:

Organization and country	Representative with the right to vote	Proxy
DESCO, Peru	Ramiro García	---
FUPROVI, Costa Rica	Carmen González	UMM/SP, Brazil
NAHT, United States	Michael Kane	---
RWFAR, Morocco	Rajaa Kassab	---
Mazingira Institute, Kenya	Davinder Lamba	---
CENCO, Peru	Paul Maquet	---
Corporación SUR, Chile	Alfredo Rodríguez	ASO-SEPRODI, Guatemala
ASOCND, Argentina	Marina Thia	---
Habitat et Participation, Belgium	Pascale Thys	---
Habitat Netz, Germany	Knut Unger	---
Observatori DESC, Spain	Vanesa Valiño	---
CIERIC, Cuba	Rigoberto Fabelo	---
FOSOVI, Mexico	Lorena Zárate	---
TOTAL		15

3. Quorum

There are 15 members with the right to vote present at this meeting.

4. Approval of minutes from the General Assembly meeting in Dakar, February 2011

Vote: 15 in favour. Minutes are approved.

5. Approval of the agenda for this General Assembly meeting

The issues that will be reviewed in this meeting are: 1. the reports from the 6 groups that worked on various issues during the past few days before this meeting, and: 2. the current HIC global evaluation process.

Vote: 15 in favour. Agenda is approved.

6. Report from working groups

6.1 Global projects

The working group identified four ideas for global projects that could be elaborated into funding proposals:

- **Women and Housing:** This project would be linked with the work of the former and current Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing and their recommendations from the regional consultations from 2002-2006 (Miloon Kothari) and 2011 (Raquel Rolnik). A proposal was already submitted to the European Commission in February 2012 however it was rejected. Nevertheless, a decision was made by the board in Rio de Janeiro to rework the proposal and continue the search for possible funding sources. The UN-Habitat Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) is interested in discussion the future possibilities of a joint project with HIC around these themes, however HIC must decide if this would be a valuable partnership, since UN-Habitat is not proposing any funds to support the work.
- **The impact of neoliberalism on the right to housing:** This project would mainly tackle austerity measures (in Europe), and the global focus would be taken from examining the impacts of neoliberal policies and on the right to housing.
- **Struggles against evictions:** Although many HIC members struggle against evictions, and we need to make an inventory of who is working on these issues and what they are doing. Now that COHRE has ceased to exist, it is important for HIC to continue the work that they did on evictions, in alliance with other partners like Amnesty International who is now working heavily on this theme. Shivani and Miloon told us about a tool that they are developing which calculates the cost of an eviction.
- **The right to the city:** This theme is a central part of many HIC members' work, but we need to articulate our experiences and knowledge in a global project. The collective dimension is what strengthens our struggles towards the implementation of the right to the city.

KT: It will be necessary to clarify whether these projects are a sum of different projects, or if they are global projects. This is especially important for the financing of projects.

SC: HIC-South Asia and HIC-HLRN worked together on a project to calculate the losses that result from evictions in Cameroun, Kenya and India. This same methodology could be developed into a global project,

with adaptations according to each country.

VV: It is important, especially now during times of crisis, to stress the need for institutional financial support to be able to carry out these different projects and to develop the tools that we need in the Coalition.

PT: HIC member Habitat et Participation in collaboration with HIC and IAI are developing a map of urban habitat actors around the world. The “Mapamundi” shares data and a short synthesis of the habitat situation in each country with a list of the involved actors and definitions of working themes. It was developed as a tool by and for actors like HIC, so the participation of all HIC members is indispensable for the development of this tool.

6.2 Campaigns

A proposal was made to run a global HIC campaign on energy and common goods, which are issues that are increasingly being included in civil society groups’ work and are likely to become more serious problems around the world. The campaign would raise awareness on the concerns over energy and common goods and services such as water, which is a human right closely linked with the right to housing, stemming from the transfer of control over these public services from the state to financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. In addition to denouncing the impacts of neoliberal policies on the daily lives of people around the world, the campaign would highlight civil society’s collective initiatives and alternatives.

MK: While energy is a very important issue, our agenda has more pressing issues, for instance tackling how we can influence political and financial institutions like the Troika (EU, ECB and IMF) to be more democratic, and what we can do to stop neoliberal policies from violating the human rights of millions of people around the world.

JS: I don’t think it is possible to run a campaign on a new issue like energy, as we don’t have enough data to inform a campaign. We should concentrate in what we already know, for instance, the information we collect from the HLRN Violations Database and the report we produce every year on World Habitat Day. This year, we should focus on impunity and evictions, and perhaps in the future we could focus on energy but we don’t have enough information on this issue right now.

KU: It is already too late to prepare a new campaign for World Habitat Day this year. A campaign takes a year, not a month, to prepare before it is launched. Campaigns should be developed into long-term actions in order for them to have more impact, to design better communications instruments, and to involve more people. I think we should have a campaign on the impacts of the “crisis” on the right to housing.

AS: As a reminder, the General Assembly in Dakar 2011 decided to focus the campaigns for World Habitat Day in 2011 and 2012 on evictions and land grabbing.

RS: Issues related to the crisis should be tackled by a global network, because the crisis has not only affected Europe. It is a structural crisis that is affecting people all over the world. There should be more connection between HIC networks in Europe and North America.

RW: The proposal to run a campaign on energy issues is not necessarily for World Habitat Day. It was thought of as a long-term campaign because it is linked with violations of other rights related to habitat.

LZ: It is normal that there are many different positions and working themes that are emerging in this discussion. That is what makes HIC so rich, but we have to consider our real capacities and priorities to choose themes for a campaign. Joe’s suggestion about centering the issues around impunity could be linked with a lot of struggles, for instance the indignados, the crisis, and the need for changes to international institutions. The social production of habitat – whether in urban or rural areas – is another area that could link HIC at a global scale because it includes many issues like evictions and land grabbing.

CM: AITEC and Habitat et Participation have proposed to put together a publication similar to the one I coordinated on the crisis and the right to housing in Europe. The new publication would be focused on the social function of land, and would link urban and rural issues. We would find out if other HIC members are interested in collaborating in this publication.

6.3 HIC and the United Nations

HIC should consider having a permanent representation based in Geneva, in order to be closer to the UN headquarters there. This would be important in order to improve the use of various tools, like the Violations

Database and the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement. In addition, it would allow HIC to become more closely linked with other themes like food sovereignty and the organizations that work on them.

JS: We should consider the opportunities this would give us to use UN instruments at the local level. We need to learn more about the institutional work of the UNDP and the Council of the European Union, and in order to do this, the Coalition needs to have a clear strategy.

LZ: In 2010 in Rio de Janeiro, HIC made a decision to not become involved in the UN's World Urban Campaign, however, we should take another vote now to decide with the members who are here in Naples whether HIC should become involved in this campaign or not.

Motion: HIC maintains its decision to not become involved in the UN World Urban Campaign.

Vote: 13 in favour
2 abstentions

6.4 Online tools

A decision was made in 2010 that the four different HIC websites should be coordinated in a way to make it possible to share information between the various sites while avoiding the duplicated efforts of posting information on every site. Some steps have been made toward this end, and most recently, a working group was formed in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 to work on building a portal that would provide a gateway to the various websites, as well as to define the common criteria that should be shared among the sites. There are some technical issues that need to be worked out, seeing as not all of the sites are organized in the same logic. Other online HIC tools including the Violations Database and the HIC Member Space need to be promoted more to increase their use among members.

6.5 The General Secretariat and HIC Structures

The coordination between the various HIC structures must be strengthened, especially in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure that every HIC office can secure institutional and financial stability.

Another pressing issue is the closing of the General Secretariat in Chile at the end of 2013. The board must assume the responsibility of identifying and selecting a new General Secretary. Proposals will be brought to the next General Assembly in Tunis in March 2013 which will be debated on by the membership.

6.6 HIC Constitution

The HIC inner and outer world has changed since the HIC Constitution was written in 1997, and a proposal was made to revise the constitution. This revision has two objectives: 1. Modify the concept of membership fees to a more general understanding that includes members' qualitative contributions; and 2. Strengthen the Board by modifying its operational and conceptual methods.

To work on this process, a committee will be formed to conduct a consultative process from now until March 2013. The proposed committee members are Lorena Zárata, Joseph Schechla, Carmen Gonzalez, Vanesa Valiño, Michael Kane, Miloon Kothari, Shivani Chaudhry, Davinder Lamba, Ana Falu, Ramiro García, and Peter Slits.

This committee will be coordinated by Ana Sugranyes with communications in 5 languages (Spanish, English, French, Arabic, and Dutch) and with virtual meetings to conduct the following tasks: 1. Call for members' proposals (October-November 2012); 2. First draft of a joint proposal (end of December 2012); 3. Consultation with a lawyer to review necessary legal aspects (January 2013); 4. Dissemination of the proposed changes (February 2013); 5. Presentation and vote on the proposed changes during the General Assembly meeting in Tunis (March 2013).

MK: The committee agrees on the amendment process, but not on the specific example of abolishing membership fees.

LZ: We need to make a decision on this motion.

Motion: Initiate an amendment process of the HIC Constitution, beginning now (September 2012) and leading up to the next General Assembly meeting in Tunis (March 2013).

Vote: 13 in favour
0 against
0 abstentions

* Two members with the right to vote were not in the room at the time of this vote. **Vote is unanimous.**

7 Evaluation

AS: As we are undergoing a new stage in the Coalition, it is very important that the evaluation is participatory so that we can learn from the results and use that knowledge to strengthen the Coalition.

JD: As we are currently in the middle of the evaluation, it is too early to present concrete results. It is still possible to fill out the online survey for those members who have not done so already. The results from the workshops we've had the past few days here in Naples, as well as the interviews we've had with members and HIC structures will be used to inform the final evaluation.

8 Financial Reports

The Coalition receives financial support from multiple sources which are detailed in the HIC Annual Report.

Motion: Approve the financial reports.

Vote: 14 votes in favour
0 against
0 abstentions

* One member with the right to vote was not in the room at the time of this vote. **Vote is unanimous.**

9 Next General Assembly Meeting

The next General Assembly meeting will take place in Tunis at the end of March around the time of the World Social Forum.

10 Additional motions presented to the GA

JS: I propose that Eike Schuetz (formerly from Misereor) be named as a Wisdom Keeper.

AS: I propose that Diana Lee-Smith be named as a Wisdom Keeper.

AR: I propose that Davinder Lamba be named as a Wisdom Keeper.

Vote: 14 votes in favour
0 against
0 abstentions

* One member with the right to vote was not in the room at the time of this vote. **Vote is unanimous.**

11 Closing

The General Assembly meeting ended according to schedule, five hours after it began.

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HIC-GS / October 2012