

# HABITAT III INFORMAL HEARINGS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ASSOCIATIONS

## SPEECH LUCIANA BLASCO

Undersecretary of Culture of Buenos Aires, Representative of the Committee on Culture of UCLG

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Ladies and gentlemen, friends,

It gives me great pleasure to address you as the **Secretary for Cultural Policies** of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and as a representative of the city that **co-chairs** the Committee on culture of UCLG.

Buenos Aires is one of the largest cities in the world. We are honoured by the responsibility to contribute to these Habitat III informal Hearings with local governments and authorities.

Also, it is an honour to co-chair the **Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments**, and to address you in representation of over 650 cities, networks and organisations, from all continents, driving and implementing a pioneering document, the first global document on culture and sustainable urban development: the **Agenda 21 for culture**, which is a very useful guide, a manual, that helps cities around the world to operationalise “the cultural dimension of sustainable cities”.

What brings together these cities and local governments? We are united by the **certainty** that it is impossible to understand a city without its culture and identity. The **belief** that, unless the cultural dimension is made explicit, a city will never be sustainable.

To put it in **positive, proactive terms**, and I am sure that all members of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments will share this view: there is **an urgent need to make culture a key dimension of urban policies**, by protecting heritage, supporting creativity, promoting diversity, ensuring that knowledge is accessible to everyone; that is, guaranteeing a fundamental human right: **the right to culture**.

Many of the cities and local governments that have made culture explicit and operational in their policies, are attending these Hearings.

It's not just a coincidence. Let's see some examples:

- The experience of intermediary cities such as **Chefchaouen** in Morocco, or **Angers** in France, which have become global models through the integration of culture in holistic development plans.



- The rigorous, solid work of **Malmö** in Sweden, **Johannesburg** in South Africa, **Paris** in France, and **Mexico City**, the cultural strategies of which are explicitly based, in an innovative way, on cultural rights.
- The urban transformation processes carried out by **Barcelona** or **Medellin**, based on the cultural dimension existing in these cities..
- Resilience and community building, through culture, after natural disasters, as in the case of **Banda Aceh** in Indonesia.
- Cultural mediation programmes to bring culture to all the inhabitants of a city, such as the **European Metropolis of Lille** or **Montreal**.
- The integration of the elements that link nature, culture and peace, as in **Jeju Island**, Korea.
- Training programmes in art and culture, which empower citizens in all age groups, especially young people, as in **Bogotá** or **Belo Horizonte**.
- The work of cultural actors in the creative industries, as in **Pekalongan** (Indonesia), **Cape Town**, **Liverpool** or **Bilbao**.
- The pioneering experience of **Quito** in Ecuador, in the field of heritage protection. This was the first city to be recognised, together with Krakow, as a cultural site within the World Heritage list. Quito will soon welcome us, as host city for Habitat III.
- The participation of cultural actors from my city, **Buenos Aires**, well known as a city of Design, of Heritage and of Music (tango was one of the first expressions recognised by UNESCO as part of the Intangible World Heritage).

Culture is an **essential component of development**.

**Globally**, because there is no solution to the challenges of humanity without explicitly addressing cultural challenges.

**Locally**, because there is no sustainable urban development without clear and operational cultural policies.



Finally, let me say a few words concerning the zero draft of the New Urban Agenda, published on 6 May 2016, which I believe is a good starting point.

We welcome the references to the **key role of local and regional governments** to ensure the well-being of our communities.

We welcome the reference to the concept of the **“right to the city”**, although we believe this should be made more operational throughout the text.

We welcome the fact that the preamble is explicit and recognises that humanity is facing “social, economic, political, cultural and environmental **challenges and opportunities**”.

We welcome the relationship between **public spaces** and cultural expressions.

We welcome the recognition of **diversity** as a constitutive element of culture and urban life.

We welcome the recognition that culture creates **jobs** and contributes decisively to urban economies.

We share the need for urban policies based on citizenship. Therefore, we welcome the importance given to **“[leveraging] culture and heritage... through integrated urban policies”**, as well as the commitment to “[investing] adequate budget shares, at both the local and national levels, to safeguard and promote cultural and natural heritage, cultural infrastructures and sites, museums, as well as traditional knowledge and the arts”.

We also want to highlight that heritage and culture are placed as a priority component of **urban plans** through the adoption of planning instruments and guidelines that protect the tangible and intangible heritage. But we believe that it is time to systematise these issues through effective models of **“cultural impact assessment”** in urban development processes.



Three important issues are missing from the current draft:

- 1- Firstly, we believe that some cultural services should be recognised as **basic urban services**. The final draft should identify them.
- 2- Secondly, although the zero draft already mentions tangible and intangible heritage, the performing arts and the cultural industries, a “complete local cultural system” should also include **libraries** (the gateway to the knowledge society), and the **visual arts** (essential for human development), and also mention the importance of **arts education**.
- 3- Lastly, we believe that the text should include a clear mention (which does not exist now) on the importance of including cultural issues within “**national urban policies**”.

We congratulate the secretariat of Habitat III for this excellent zero draft.

In the coming weeks we will work in depth on this draft, and a complete document with comments and new recommendations will be presented at the Habitat III PrepCom 3 meeting to be held in Surabaya, Indonesia, in July.

Thanks for your attention.