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

**Intersession Consultation with Stakeholders, 6 June 2016, New York**

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Public Services International is 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 across all sectors 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 **us** 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 as it stands 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 to the Habitat Secretariat 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. Not only informal and migrant workers face unprecedented challenges in cities today, but all workers, very much including those in the formal economy. Precarious work, bogus self-employment, unsafe working conditions, lack of freedom of association, and jobs that don't pay a living wage are major causes – if not the major cause - 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'***, whereas these are ***the critical levers of social inclusion, and local governments have a central role to play in such policies.*** Investment by itself will just not deliver.

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. But 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.

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 benchmarking of cities performance. Each city is unique and should not be played against another 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 under everyone's eyes.

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 into an overreliance on 'public-private partnerships' (PPPs). Twenty years on and many dramatic failures after in water services, in electricity, in health care and education, Habitat III must not make the same mistake. ***There is no evidence that PPP's are more efficient than public sector service providers*** and we and 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 a favourite choice by 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 on urban workers and communities against our vision of cities where working people, their families and communities come first. 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 I wish a good continuation of the work on the New Urban Agenda.