

Advisory Group on Gender Issues, AGGI Statement

**delivered by Prof. Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, Chair of AGGI and Director of the
UNESCO Chair on Gender, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
UN Habitat Executive Board 29-31 March 2022**

Dear Executive Director, Member States and colleagues

I am here as Chair of AGGI, the Advisory Group on Gender Issues, an independent expert advisory body that advises and supports the Executive Director on all aspects of UN Habitat's work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. AGGI was created by initiative of the UN-Habitat Governing Council in 2011. We want to deeply thank the Governments of Tanzania, Ghana, Norway, and Zambia, who supported the Governing Council Resolution 23/1 through which AGGI was born.

A whole decade has passed. In these 10 years, we as AGGI have issued numerous reports and contributions to key UN Habitat's work, such as our participation in the drafting and thorough and complete revision of the drafts of both the First and the Second Quadrennial Reports of the New Urban Agenda.

We have initiated several Resolutions, including the very important Resolution 1/4 'Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements', of 2019.

We have organized and participated in dozens of side events, networking sessions, expert groups, and official sessions linked to all major UN conferences on human settlements and on gender equality, including, last week, a very successful session at CSW on "Gender, climate change and human settlements", sponsored by the Government of Spain, to whom we want to express our deep gratitude.

Last year we issued the "Valencia Declaration on Gender and Sustainable Development in the Post-pandemic", as an output of an expert meeting sponsored by the Government of Valencia. This Declaration also builds on the four Reports that we produced during the height of the pandemic, in 2020, for an Expert Group organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. The Declaration lays out a vision for a Gender Equality and women's empowerment agenda with priority solutions and recommendations.

Our Activity Report 2012-2021 shows the breadth and depth of a decade of AGGI contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment in human settlements, supporting UN-Habitat's normative and operational work.

During this decade, a whole new landscape of UN policies regarding human settlements has been developed, of which the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the new governance of UN-Habitat, are key elements.

This new policy landscape requires an update of our original mandate, which was set up ten years ago in a very different context.

We are currently working with UN-Habitat for ulterior updating of our Terms of Reference, in order to even better align our working procedures with these key developments: the new governance of UN-Habitat, the NUA and the SDGs.

The process is almost complete. As a call for nominations of new AGGI members will be issued, some of our members step down to emeritus position. We ask member states to contribute to our membership by widely disseminating the call for nominations.

We ask for the continued support of member states to UN-Habitat for an effective implementation of the Resolution 1/4 'Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements', of 2019.

Women- including urban poor, those living in informal settlements or working in informal economies, the grassroots, those displaced - are working against huge challenges to survive for their families and communities. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, climate change, and pandemics; but they are also partners and resilient leaders in the creation of green, just, sustainable, and prosperous cities.

An appropriate response of UN-Habitat to this Resolution will require support and actions in several areas. Better sex disaggregated statistics with better gender indicators are a basic pre-requisite, needed for establishing clear baselines for action, needed also for improved monitoring and reporting systems, at both national and local levels.

Improved institutionalization with adequate staffing and resourcing of a dedicated administrative structure focusing on gender and women's empowerment, which is located at the possible higher level within the organizational architecture of UNH, is another prerequisite.

We have seen a lot of advancement since so many women organizations around the globe started carrying out projects and programmes to promote gender equality, with the Women and Habitat programme established in 1990.

But we should not be complacent with the present situation, for there are risks that potentially undermine the hard-fought gains of women in cities and human settlements.

War and conflict are among those threats. Many women are in conflict countries, and many others have been displaced. As we today can tragically see in Europe and many other countries, more work needs to be done regarding women in conflict. At the next WUF in Katowice we should address these issues.

We call for the continued support of member states, and we thank Member States and UN-Habitat, on behalf of all the women in the world, who are grateful for this opportunity and support to women's participation in better communities and cities.

30th March 2022

Prof. Inés Sánchez de Madariaga
Chair AGGI

Advisory Group on Gender Issues to the Executive Director of UN Habitat