

Grassroots' Assembly – “Declare your action” session statement at APUF 7

Delivered by Ms. Ruby Papeleras, Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA), on behalf of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Huairou Commission, SDI and WIEGO networks.

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We represent networks of citizens living in informal settlements, informal workers and grassroots women, which constitute 50 to 60% of the population in most of our cities.

We are the lifeline of our cities, productive citizens. Without us many sectors of the economy like agriculture, manufacturing, transport, tourism would simply not work. We keep our cities functioning.

Grassroots communities know our cities best. Through our everyday experience of the city, and data-collection activities such as community and city-wide mapping and profiling, we find and support each other and have a knowledge that is critical for inclusive urban and territorial planning.

We have created our own community finance systems. We organize networks of savings groups at the city and local levels, like the Community Development Funds and the Community Resilience Fund, where we have pooled together our own resources to manage, identify and prioritize our own needs, provide affordable loans to each other, and right away start solving our problems collectively and help us be prepared when disasters and economic shocks strike.

We negotiate access to land in the city to ensure that we keep our livelihoods, **we plan and build our own houses and settlements collectively**, using local knowledge, materials and resources, wasting no space. We build collective housing for people, not for profit. And in this forum, we have launched a joint initiative to promote collective housing as the main solution to secure housing for grassroots in Asia and the Pacific.

We build resilient communities by increasing awareness on the impacts of climate change, organizing community-based risk reduction and response plans.

We are doing our part, we will continue to work to empower women, support the organization of informal workers and communities living in informal settlements, **but we need support:**

- **We need bottom-up policies, laws and regulations that are inclusive, flexible, pro-poor and promote equality.** Land, zoning, public space and construction codes and regulations should prioritize the needs and capacities of the poor. We are ready to partner with governments to ensure sustainable solutions and responses to the real needs of the people.
- **We need capable and committed national and local governments that trust us, listen to us and can work hand in hand with** organized communities like us.
- To scale up our solutions, we need **access to resources** such as land, flexible financial support, and effective participatory planning and decision-making processes.
- **We are ready to build partnerships** with local governments, private sector, community architects, committed professionals and other stakeholders to design inclusive, safe, lively and distinctive public spaces and cities for all

Come to our communities, to our marketplaces, to the slum areas, but take the public transport! Have lunch with us! Meet our children. Include us as an equal partner – not as an afterthought! We will show you how to work with us!

Working together will help us achieve the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. If not, you will be the ones left behind.

We are ready. Are you?