

# Local Social Covenant: Advancing commitments to housing justice

**To:** Mr. Mario Bergara, Mayor of Montevideo; Ms. Fatiha El Moudni, Mayor of Rabat; Ms. Clara Marina Brugada Molina, Head of Government of Mexico City; Mr. Jaume Collboni, Mayor of Barcelona

**CC:** All members of UCLG Policy Councils  
Partner members and key allies of the Hub for Housing Justice

Dear members of the UCLG Policy Council,

**On behalf of the Hub for Housing Justice, we express our gratitude for your letter, “Local Social Covenant: our commitment to housing,”** in response to the correspondence, “Your commitment to housing justice.” We applaud your recognition of the need of a systematic approach that transforms local governance to address the housing crisis. As civil society networks and research organisations, we write this response drawing from our experiences advancing housing justice with the goal of offering pathways to strengthen, as requested in your letter, our collective capacity to act.



In your letter, you commit to **“affirming housing as a fundamental human right and a public common good.”** For local and regional governments (LRGs), we believe this requires **embracing your role as duty-bearers**, holding a binding obligation – and not merely a political aspiration – to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing. This means **strategically using diverse levers of governance** – including public assets, policies, laws and regulations, and funding – to guarantee human rights. It is also important to **be proactively transparent** about how these levers are used, to enable proper accountability that expands citizens’ agency. You can do so by ensuring open access to public information, registration systems, and public assets. You can also establish institutions like observatories dedicated to monitoring housing conditions and violations, with accessible communication channels.



You also commit to **“addressing discrimination in access to housing to be a central priority.”** Upholding this promise begins with recognising the place of LRGs in systems that have historically discriminated against certain groups, with policies often perpetrating housing injustices. The reparatory duty of the public sector extends beyond preventing discrimination, to **pursuing affirmative anti-discriminatory approaches and practices**. LRGs can use incentives like tax deductions or quotas requirements to encourage inclusive housing; you can also deploy regulations and tenancy agreements to protect renters. Crucially, **adopting more inclusive notions of affordability** that move away from market benchmarks to centring residents’ ability to pay, is a critical anti-discriminatory measure.



When you commit to **“preventing forced evictions and protecting residents from displacement,”** you are committing to securing the conditions to **promote residents’ right to remain in place**. LRGs have great power in **localising international law on forced evictions**, including requiring protocols and compliance for the prevention and remedy of evictions; enforcing eviction moratoriums; and establishing conflict resolution mechanisms that lead to long-term solutions. Additionally, you can explore **repurposing and improving existing housing stock**, through the conversion of vacant properties or participatory regeneration programmes. You are also the first contact point for displaced and homeless people and can work with them to **provide adequate emergency housing solutions**.



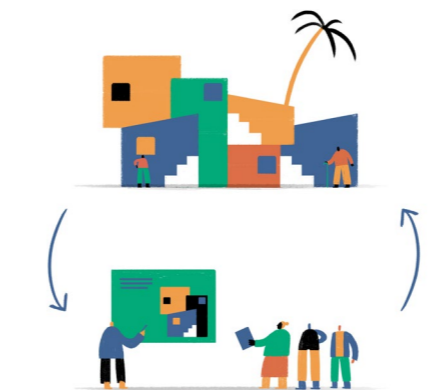
As the government closest to people, your commitment to **“place residents’ participation at the centre of housing policy design and decision-making”** holds many opportunities. This includes **supporting collective housing processes** by recognising different forms of land tenure or registering cooperatives. You can **enable community-led upgrading and retrofitting** as a strategy to improve neighbourhoods and housing conditions. Participatory budgeting or councils and the use of community data will enable you to **democratise housing policy-making**, while strengthening democracy itself through housing.



Your commitment to strengthening **“financing systems that prioritise social value over speculation”** goes beyond short-term fixes or isolated programmes, to leading the transformation of the financing architecture. An important strategy is **establishing land value capture mechanisms** to ensure you can invest in services that will benefit all. Crucially, you can **diversify finance mechanisms for a range of housing needs**, sponsoring entities for collectives or informal workers, reviewing legislation to allow for incremental processes, or collaborating with financial institutions to drive innovation. You can also **combat the financialisation of housing and land** by designing incentives, regulations or taxation mechanisms that prevent speculation.



Your commitment to unlock **“housing’s potential as a powerful enabler of broader policy outcomes”** can be advanced through direct action. Within your jurisdiction, you can **align housing initiatives with wider urban, environmental, and social policies**. Housing policies can promote urban development that consolidate or challenge patterns of segregation and exclusion. It is crucial to place at the centre of housing the access to services and public goods. Housing initiatives can also help residents be more resilient to climate shocks, promoting adaptation in disaster-prone areas. This also involves activating the role of **housing as an infrastructure of care**, by advancing initiatives that reach people and places systematically excluded, and support the reproduction of life in sustainable and fair ways.



We are ready to work with you to achieve your final commitment to **“reaffirm the importance of ensuring that these shared political priorities translate into practical implementation on the ground.”** This requires, first and foremost, **pursuing public-community partnerships** that put into motion collaborative work to advance common housing justice visions. Such partnerships will be most effective when they **build on and strengthen existing community structures**. Networks of LRGs and civil society are also an asset that is critical to exchange, learn, and build from each other. Success also depends on **nurturing the capacities of your public workers** by periodically providing training and ensuring labour protections.

We celebrate the LRGs who are leading the way through the measures mentioned above and believe the municipalist movement has the power to enhance learning and galvanise further action. As the housing crisis intensifies, doing so is both necessary and urgent. We stand ready to work with you to turn housing justice into reality.

Sincerely,

The Hub for Housing Justice

