"Cities With A Future"
CAF CONFERENCE, LIMA
Dated 3rd. November 2017

I would like to begin by thanking CAF President Luis Carranza, VP Jose Carrera & Hely Olvares for having invited me as a Keynote speaker to this important conference. Also, thanks to Barbara Zamora & others in CAF for extending logistical support.

I also thank my friend Luis Rodriguez Rivero for suggesting my name to CAF.

I am extremely humbled by the presence of so many knowledgeable Latin American people, including many past and present Ministers, Mayors and, administrators, having deep insight in to the question of housing and the future of cities, that I wonder why I have been invited from far away Mumbai. Anyway, I do not run any risk; the risk is of those who have invited me. Their names are on record. Good luck.

IT IS A POLITICAL MOVEMENT INDEED!
STRUGGLE FOR HOUSING AND THE MAKING OF INCLUSIVE CITIES

Dear Friends,

I have been here once before. Lima, much as Mumbai, is plagued by the deplorable living condition in slums that is home to over 30% of the city's population. In Mumbai it is 50-55%, being 6.4 million who live in slums, but occupying just 16% of the total developable land area of the city. **What can be more equal between us, nations 17,000 km apart, than the question of land mis-utilisation, exclusionary city planning and the state of in-dignified and oppressive housing conditions in which such large numbers of people are forced to live in slums, thus undermining the idea of equality and justice and above all the democratization of cities?**

It is a failure of the free market and various city and state governments in undertaking the responsibility of affordable housing production and supply. It is the lack of availability of formally developed affordable housing that is contributing to the proliferation of slums in both our cities, as much as many other cities across nations that experience similar tragedy.

I will now dwell upon just three key aspects of the state of housing and urbanization - land, city planning and democratization of cities, though briefly, and share with you some of my experiences in Mumbai. Central to the issue of affordable housing in particular, is a deeper understanding of the state of slums and the deplorable living conditions that millions of marginalized toiling people who contribute significantly to cities economy and its diverse political, social and cultural life, are subjected to.

I hope that the examples that I will present in order to back my arguments and the propositions will resonate in the experiences that you have in your respective cities. This is so, in spite of the situations and details not being exactly the same, rather varying between

places. But it is the overarching ideas and principles that would be the same, influencing our understanding of the question of housing, thus forming the basis of our collective dialouge and their independent follow-up.

As a matter of fact, slums are the only places where people find affordable housing option, for outright purchase or on rent, even though legally un-tenable in most instances. Also, integral to the housing question is the level of access to social amenities- education and health care, open spaces; infrastructure- sewage, sanitation, safe drinking water, waste clearance, etc. Needless to say that the environmental condition too, that directly impacts the quality of life and individual and community health, is also a matter of concern.

My thoughts and ideas on the question of housing are synonymous with the various struggles of millions of poor and marginalized people and the movements they have waged in Mumbai for claiming right to housing, in which my organization Nivara Hakk and I, have actively participated. An understanding and assessment of the various issues relating to the housing question are squarely based on the needs, aspirations and demands of these struggling people and their relationship, or the lack of it, with the city.

Let me now dwell upon each of the following three issues:

1. **Land**: The Achievement of Land Equity & Occupation Slum Land
2. **City planning**: Inclusive Planning & the Integration of Slum Land
3. **Democratisation of Cities**: Housing Beyond Free Market

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1. **Achievement of Land Equity & Occupation Slum Land:**

For me it all started in the year 1980- a couple of years after I graduated from a school of architecture in Mumbai. That is when the slum dwellers of Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, along with my organization Nivara Hakk opposed the demolition and forced eviction of the slum situated at Nariman Point- a high profile business district in the exclusive area of south Mumbai.**Their struggle was essentially a battle for land. They fought a heroic battle for homes and shelter and won when the state government gave them alternate land on ownership for rehabilitation**.

Initially, with the active participation of the slum community, we prepared a layout plan for the new place and accordingly apportioned land to individual families. Together, we prepared a set of development control regulations and guidelines. It was a self-help housing scheme that was pursued. People built their own houses and developed common areas like open spaces, a balwadi (pre-school), a community center along with a health care unit, etc. The houses were built independently by each family and grew differently, the expressions

reflecting their needs and life-styles and their economic condition and also their attitude and interaction.

If it is one thing that we have learnt from Sanjay Gandhi Nagar and other struggles for housing rights, it is that, people must continue to occupy land on which they have painstakingly built their houses and work places. Left without any option, slum dwellers have fought against multiple evictions and rebuilt their houses many times over with unbearable expenditures, besides suffering from enormous mental and physical stress being subject to a state of abuse, humiliation and uncertainty.

These achievements, in spite of the many hurdles and certain contradictions, have not come on a platter due to the wisdom of the government. **These are, indeed, matters of great achievement of people's movements for claiming right to housing and participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is land rights alone that forms the foundation of a long and arduous path which is ridden with many challenges towards achievement of the "Right to City".**

Year 2000- The Battle for Sangharsh Nagar:

I now fast forward to a period much later- year 2000- when a spate of violent demolitions of over **70,000** slum houses built in the periphery of a National Park (named Sanjay Gandhi Rashtriya Udyan) in north-central Mumbai, were carried out. My organization along with the slum-dwellers challenged their eviction.

After a long and arduous battle, including legal challenges, Nivara Hakk carried out negotiations with the State Government for rehabilitation of the displaced people. By 2015, nearly 15000 families had moved to an alternate site setting up their new town named Sangharsh Nagar (Sangharsh means struggle), with amenities, open spaces and infrastructure. Though a lot more remains to be done with regard to infrastructure and conveniences, **Sangharsh Nagar is significant for Mumbai not only for the large number of housing units and its sheer size, but also for the impact it has made on the struggle for housing rights, including claims for right to land and the formulation of various housing policies by the government.**

Through a participatory process and extensive dialogue, a rehabilitation plan was prepared by us for 25,000 houses and undertaken at the alternate site with ground and seven storied buildings. Prevailing FSI-3 had to be consumed and a host of other regulations imposed by the Slums Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) were followed too.

In order to enable effective participation, campaign posters and models of the development were also prepared. Today, over 200 Co-Operative Societies have already been registered and an apex body – 'Mahasangh' has been established too. It is the Mahasangh that organizes and manages the common property- streets, community centers, schools etc., while coordinating with various co-operative societies on day-to-day matters. Lessons drawn from this rehabilitation project is of immense value to the specific subject of slums rehabilitation and redevelopment and the larger question of development of affordable housing.

Lessons learnt-

Cities and towns that have vacant undeveloped land must ensure that land proportionate to the demand for affordable housing is reserved in the development plan exclusively for it, not marked generally for housing ('H'), that is then, as we witness, taken over and consumed for speculative high- cost real estate development for the rich. In cities like Mumbai, where vacant public land is seldom available (shrunk post 1991, the year India committed to liberalization of its economy and the privatization of development works and common resources), reservation of slum land for affordable housing would help in substantial terms in building pools of land bank.

Participatory planning of slums redevelopment can lead to substantial improvement in the conditions of living and the provision of social amenities and infrastructure, as we witness in the plan of 'Sangharsh Nagar'.

I conclude this section by the following suggestions:

1. Reserve land exclusively for affordable housing in the Development Plan of cities, in proportion to demand
2. Reserve slum occupied land for affordable Housing by undertaking mapping of slums
3. Ensure integration of land for affordable housing with various neighborhoods and city
4. Governments underwrite value of land in the cost of housing in order to make housing affordable by the poor and the middle class

2. Preparation of Development Plan Of Cities Based On Existing Land Occupation Pattern:

We have also learnt through the struggle for housing by the National Park slum-dwellers that it is important to achieve the integration of slums with various neighborhoods and the city. Slums must not be segregated from other developments or excluded by building a

physical barricade as was unsuccessfully attempted in the case of Lima. Such, and other forms of segregation and discrimination ridden with poor services and infrastructure provision, lead to polarization of communities and social tension, thereby undermining the very idea of cities.

Therefore, the unification of segregated people and spaces is a necessary sustainable urban development condition. Sadly, current trend of urbanization is leading to divided and disparately fragmented cities. In this process, the rich and influential have the priviledge to capture public land and resources, while majority people are further pauperized. Therefore, I strongly argue that the **development plan of cities must be based on the existing land occupation pattern that over the years has led to the achievement of interim justice in land use (a step forward indeed in the long term battle for equity), in spite of the many hurdles and limitations this may entail in their legalisation.**

Mapping of slums:
In the case of Mumbai, Mapping of slum land and the preparation of a Slums Redevelopment Master Plan by my organization gives an interesting insight of facts and data and a redevelopment perspective that is contrary to the information & path that governments provide, being obsessively tilted towards the interest of private builders and their profit motive.

As evident in the case of Sangharsh Nagar, we find that through comprehensive planning of slum land, it is possible to set aside land for necessary amenities, open spaces and infrastructure. Also, it is possible to plan for a mixed-use development by including affordable work- spaces. Thus, it is slums redevelopment that forms an effective means for the achievement of inclusive cities.

<mark>Our slum mapping, Mumbai- slide</mark>

Another objective of mapping would be to determine and demand the fixation of land value in relation to the social objective of its use and not the way governments get driven by the prevailing market conditions that determine one common value for land of an entire area depending on their location. This is not a new idea. Governments in various countries, particularly in Latin America, have introduced varying land prices depending on the social objective of their use. In Maharashtra, the state government too has through its slums redevelopment policy has done away with the market value of land for calculating cost of slums redevelopment projects. Housing does become affordable to most people only when the land value is underwritten. Otherwise we find that a 300 sft. house, in central Mumbai for example, as available in the open market would cost over ten million Indian rupees (rupees one crore).

Maps are an insight into a nations progress. Not maps that define National boundaries, but maps that define cities and neighborhoods. Maps that reveal the resources we may have lost or colonized, Maps that make us vigilant and protective. Effort must me made to continually map the city in extensive detail…. if we are to build a more equitable city for its citizens.

Lesson learnt:

Master planning of slum land would enable us to achieve the integration of slum land and slum dwellers with the city. It is participatory urban planning with thrust on affordable housing that has the power if undertaken through democratic means, to stitch together the disparate city fragments and enable the sharing of resources.

Way forward towards an Inclusive City Planning:
1. Prepare Development Plan of cities based upon existing land occupation pattern
2. Undertake participatory mapping of slums and promote open data
3. Undertake affordable housing and slum land master plan based on town-planning standards visa-vi open spaces, amenities and infrastructure
4. Promote participation in urban planning and design as a right

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3. Housing Beyond Free Market & Democratization of cities

The two issues and objectives that I have argued- occupation slum land & the achievement of land equity and re-envisioning cities based on existing land occupation pattern, takes us to third important objective, i.e. the democratization of cities and production of affordable housing beyond the free market. As a matter of fact, the first two objectives themselves, but not exclusively, contribute to the achievement of the third, i.e. the democratization of cities objective.

Struggle for housing is essentially a democratic rights struggle. Movements and struggles for housing are effective democratic means for the achievement of equal and just cities. Participatory housing and development plans and programs are a necessary tenet of democracy. It is a struggle not just for individuals gain but also for building collective power.

We have to go far beyond the romantisation of these marginalized settlements and communities or for that matter the enterprise of the poor that is pursued by them under highly oppressive conditions, without freedom of choice. Living and working conditions in slums are deplorable. Low-grade, insufficient services and amenities coupled with over flowing drains and garbage pile-up has led to unhygienic living conditions, thereby adversely affecting the health and laboring capacity of the slum dwellers.

Repairing and retrofitting the various adhoc civic services and collapsing infrastructure, for that matter the houses people have built, as being the sole objective will not work. Neither will adhoc additions and alterations sustain. Also, there is huge pressure from slumlords and

officials of various local authorities who demand payments for extending support and imposing illegal taxes. Rule of law seldom works in these pockets of parallel power that control and manage land and the unjust way houses and services are built and distributed. **To challenge these prevailing socio-political conditions, that participatory slums reconstruction programs with comprehensive planning of slum land across the city could be an effective means for bringing about significant social and political changes.**

Newspapers coverage -slides

Development of Affordable Housing being a political question has to be pursued through collective dialogue and participatory endeavors. It is in this context that **participation in urban planning and design ought to be considered a right. The democratization of planning and design, indeed of housing, would be a significant step towards the democratization of cities.**

The key to solving the complex problems of housing undoubtedly lie squarely with the respective governments. They must abandon their reliance on the free market and intervene aggressively with greater responsibility and answerability to create pools of land bank and housing stock aimed at providing affordable homes for all.

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