Concept Note

I. Background

For the first time in history, more than half of humanity lives in urban areas. By 2050, this proportion will reach nearly 70%, making urbanization one of the 21st century’s most transformative trends, intensifying its social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental challenges and opportunities.

Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11 focuses on *Making cities and human settlements inclusive, sustainable, safe, resilient, and sustainable*, it presents cities as hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more. The SDGs further promote *gender equality and empowerment of women and girls* in Goal 5. In tandem with these global goals, the New Urban Agenda, affirms a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use, and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity, and ensure that all inhabitants, of the present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements, to foster prosperity and quality of life for all. It aims to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union agenda envisions “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena.” While urbanization presents massive challenges, it is also an engine for sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development and environment protection and thus a potential contributor to the achievement of transformative and sustainable development.

Moreover, The AfriCities 8th Summit, scheduled to take place in Marrakech, Morocco, from November 20 to November 24, 2018 and with a focus on "The transition to sustainable cities and territories, the role of African local governments” presents grassroots women and local communities to share their contribution and present their hope for a rapidly urbanizing Africa. United Cities and Local Government who is the convener of AFRICITIES describes the 8th summit as a “starting point the situation of Africa in globalization and urbanization; will shed
light on the dimensions of the transition from the current changes, and will focus on the role and
strategy of African territorial Governments in the transition. It is essential to underline that the
territorial and local government have the closest link with grassroots communities and are the
front duty bearers in ensuring in particular that grassroots women have access to quality,
affordable and adequate public services. Over the years, there is evidence on the benefits
accrued when local and territorial government effectively partner and build on the immense
capacities and lived experiences of women at the local level. Huairou Commission (leading)
Slum dwellers International, GROOTS Kenya and FEMNET have collaborated in anchoring the
session that will highlights the contribution and hopes of grassroots women in advancing
sustainable development with a special focus on Security of Women’s Land and Housing
tenure, Urban Economy, Urban Safety, Rural Urban Linkages and Local Governance. Besides
having grassroots and women rights actors in Africa on the panel, The session will be graced by
representation from core institutional partners in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Grassroots women’s organization in different countries in Africa have over the years developed
sustainable, practical and innovative locally driven approaches and initiatives aimed at
transforming their urban spaces and improve living conditions of city dwellers, especially the
urban poor and women. These initiatives focus on grassroot organizing for strategic
partnerships and inclusive urban governance in ways that lead to sustainable solutions to
urbanization challenges. The AfriCities Summit therefore provides a strategic space for
grassroots women to share these strategies and approaches in creating the cities we need and
shaping a vision for the Africa that we want to see. In this space grassroots women will thus
share their locally led practices and approaches and come up with key recommendations that
will accelerate realization of the objectives of Agenda 2063 and the New Urban Agenda.

2. Problem statement
Grassroots women in Africa have organized around the following key challenges in the
urbanization process.

- Lack of equal, informed, and effective participation of women in local governance
  processes including planning, budgeting implementation and monitoring of programs.
There is need to promote and strengthen multi stakeholder forums that meaningfully include women, grassroots and marginalized social groups. It is also critical to promote mechanisms for participatory local government planning and budgeting, where women, grassroots and other marginalized groups are able to influence the local government budgetary allocations based on their priorities. This however requires transparency in municipal budgets. It also require local government to cost public participation and provide of a systematic and predictable space for this participation. In addition to these, there is need for to promote monitoring and gender evaluations of impacts of municipal policies, programs and budgets and strengthen mechanisms to hold leaders accountable in ways that will promote transparency and accountability. The effort needs to continue in increasing women’s representation as policy makers and in administrative positions, in training of local government officials on gender responsiveness governance so as to overcome gender biases currently embedded in policy execution and in the creation of municipal taxation and financing systems that correspond to the lifecycle needs and changes. Grassroots women are using innovative approaches to promote inclusive and participatory urban governance processes that are bottom – up in nature. The locally led approaches are leading to more pro-poor and gender responsive city governance processes by creating spaces that enable multi stakeholder engagements and women’s effective participation in local government decision making process.

- **Lack of security of tenure and access to adequate housing in cities**
  The issue of urban land still constitutes a central point that need to be discussed further in the context of rampant urbanization in the continent and how its impacts on grassroots women’s rights to adequate housing and public spaces. Land speculation in urban areas has more impact especially on issues of slums/informal settlements, slum upgrading and evictions, compulsory land acquisitions. Grassroots women are organizing around these issues because they are the one experiencing poor and unhealthy housing conditions, facing eviction, etc. in order to get secure access and control over serviced and affordable land for women in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

- **Urban economy**
  Urban economy which aims at creating opportunities and providing resources to support women’s business development and employment, including safe and affordable
transportation, access to new technologies, and access to public spaces for markets, recognition of blurred boundaries between formal and informal activities and in formalizing informal activities provide supportive conditions and policies. Therefore, it is important to make training and skills building opportunities available for women, to strengthen urban-rural economic linkages by supporting the modernizing role that market women bring to their local environment, as well as designing and managing municipal markets to make them user-friendly and safe for women and providing employment opportunities to enable women to have more independent lives. For decades, women in Africa have developed financial innovations in responding to the systematic exclusion of the mainstream financial market that has relegated women to micro credit. Today, grassroots women are building own financial institutions with the intent to move from micro financing to sufficient and affordable capital. Urban economies ought to be redesigned to provide proper support ecosystems for these grassroots women innovations.

- **Urban ecology, environmental sustainability and resilient cities**

The importance of supporting, resourcing, and providing spaces for local community resilience knowledge creation and adaptation initiatives of women's groups in a key element to ensure environmental sustainability and resilient cities. Organizing global/regional awareness and advocacy campaigns, creating spaces for observation of human and women’s rights, and creating seats for grassroots women leaders in international organizations could prevent international investments that harm local communities. ICLEI Africa can share a case study on this, based on work we are doing in Lilongwe, Malawi.

The use of Photovoice technique as a tool to support and facilitate community-based action and engagement, inviting the voices of women and contributing as a potential catalyst for change within the larger urban natural assets (UNA) rivers initiative. A variety of activities are being implemented on the banks of the Lilongwe River in order to restore and revitalize the river. An important part of this activity is documenting the change at the site as well providing a platform for the important local community members, predominately women, involved to tell their story and be an active voice in planning and implementation.
• **Urban safety**

It is acknowledged that women experience the heightened levels of violence in urban areas, these include harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, trafficking, forced marriage, sexual harassment and domestic violence amongst others. Although these forms of violence are recognized as a major violation of human rights, public health challenge and gender discrimination their occurrences are persistent. This challenge is compounded by the fact that majority of the major Africa cities are not well planned. The attempt to re-plan existing cities and plan growing cities ought to put in top consideration the safety of women, girls and vulnerable persons.

• **Public spaces**

In the design of public spaces, local authorities should ensure the universal accessibility to safe public spaces, which can accommodate the needs of women economically, socially, and politically through women’s inclusion in the design, development, and maintenance of public spaces.

• **Innovative tools for knowledge and information transfer:**

To ensure resilient cities building, it is important to collect, analyze, and disseminate geographically based, gender-disaggregated data not only with quantitative but also qualitative indicators for monitoring change with respect to women’s interests and needs. Increase research using gendered research tools. Therefore producing gender annual reports and information portals at the city level, supported by geographically based, gender-disaggregated data will ensure the recognition and inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge, as well as formal technical knowledge in planning and policy development. Our ask to all the stakeholders on this issue are the following:

- Clarify concepts and increase research on informal activities, such as the care economy and caregiving, with participation of women involved, considering the case studies of innovative practices with respect to gender and use them in trainings.
- Create new tools using open source technologies including social networking and apps, and enhance existing ones for local government staff and planners to use.
- At regional level, establish a regional platform for the exchange of lessons learned from innovative practices, especially in implementing the engendered participatory budget.
II. Structure of the Session

Session Introduction: The session will feature grassroots women’s tools and approaches that enhance participation of local communities in setting development priorities and forging strategic partnerships with local authorities, civil society groups, academia, development partners, private sector, media and national governments in building sustainable cities. It will be a roundtable discussion that will foster interactive debate on the existing tools and approaches towards creating the city we need and an Africa we want to see by 2063. During this session, the grassroots women will demonstrate how these locally led tools and approaches have strengthened their linkages and collaboration with key stakeholders and led to more inclusive and gender responsive city governance. The tools and approaches will include for example the local to local dialogues, watch dog groups, mapping and profiling, urban thinker’s campuses, Gender evaluation criteria etc. A demonstration will be made on how these tools and approaches have been used to overcome major urbanization challenges in land and housing, urban ecology, environment and resilience, Urban economy, Urban safety, and other sectors.

The session will also feature elected local government officials (mayors) who will share their experience and strategies in building inclusive and participatory city governance through creation of platforms for meaningful participation of women, grassroots and other marginalized social groups in the city planning, decision making, program implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. Recommendations will be made on how to strengthen this collaboration and support the replication of existing and emerging grassroots women’s innovative, sustainable and locally led tools and approaches.

Session Number: SDA 4 – Women’s Movements.
Session Title: Transitioning to sustainable cities: Grassroots women's leadership and approaches in Africa

Session Objectives:

I. Share grassroots women's led strategies, approaches and best practices in promoting pro poor, inclusive and gender responsive urban governance.

II. Strengthening the grassroots women's partnerships and collaboration with urban stakeholders across the continent

III. Make key recommendations for bottom – up, inclusive, gender responsive and sustainable urban/city governance.

Date/Time of Session: 21st November 2018, 14.30PM

Session Moderator/facilitator: Ramaroson Mino- Huairou Commission
Session Rapporteur: Oumar Sylla, UN-Habitat/ GLTN
Session President: Shimbulu Katrina, President of the Association of Local Authorities of Namibia
Session Speaker 1: Ms. Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malik
Session Speaker 2: Violet Shivutse - Global Chair- HC
Session speaker 3: Nachi Majoe– ICLEI Africa
Session speaker 4: Nancy Njoki, Grassroots representative- SDI
Session speaker 5: Mrs. Mina OUMLIL - AL HIDN and FEMNET
Session speaker 6: Mrs. Odunbaku Omoh - UN-Habitat , Regional Office for Africa
Session speaker 7: Samira Achour, Association Jossour FFM

Duration: 3 hours (Ninety (90) minutes for opening remarks and panelist Interventions, Sixty (60)minutes for audience feedback, questions and exchanges . Thirty minutes (30mins) dedicated to the adoption of resolutions and recommendations.

Session Agenda:
14:00-14:05: Moderator gives introduction, frames debate, presents discussion questions
14:05-14:10: Session president: Gives opening prologue for the session
14:10-14:20: Speaker 1: Gives an overview of the main policy and practice issues, challenges, gaps and opportunities for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in urbanization process.

14:20-14:30: Speaker 2: Presentation of grassroots women’s strategies/approaches in promoting inclusive, Pro poor, gender responsive – Experiences and lessons learnt from Huairou commission

14:30-14:40: Speaker 3: Presentation of a case study by ICLEI on a tool to support and facilitate community-based action and engagement, inviting the voices of women and contributing as a potential catalyst for change.

14:40-14:50: Speaker 4: Inclusive and gender responsive city governance for a transformative and sustainable urbanization process: Grassroots women’s tools and approaches. – Slum Dwellers International

14:50-15:00 Speaker 5: The experience of women networks in Morocco in advancing the urban agenda and the vision of FEMNET in strengthening security of land and housing tenure in Africa among women rights and gender equality actors in Africa

15:00-15:10 Speaker 6: Rural Urban linkages; an opportunity to accelerate securing of women’s land tenure, economic empowerment and access to descent basic services in Africa

15:10-15:20 Speaker 7: The experience of the Association Joussour

15:20-16:30 - Moderator discusses opens up for questions and discussions from the floor

16:30-17:00 – Rapporteur lead the adoption of resolutions and recommendations