



Statement

In the fight against climate change, natural local materials also have something to say

We, the undersigned social movements and civil society organizations, raise our voices in this space of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 25) to be held in Madrid, Spain from the 2nd to the 14th of December 2019, to issue a pledge in support of the construction with local natural materials in the realization of human rights linked to habitat, goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fight against climate change.

We take this initiative based on our experience with the processes of construction and reconstruction of housing and habitat, both in urban and rural settings in different countries of Latin America, years of going against the dominant culture that has devastated the diversity of traditional constructive techniques in order to support the commercial production of housing, and that has put in the centre the economic gains of a few companies over social and productive processes and the economy of families, generating in its wake the environmental devastation of large areas in our countries.

The world population and migration - frequently caused by the terrible effects of climate change - towards urban areas are growing continuously and, with them, so is the need for housing. The current development model is not allowing us to limit global warming to 1.5 C ° as indicated by the intergovernmental group of experts on climate change (IPCC) and as established in the Paris Agreement, the necessary limit to avoid major disasters that go beyond the ones we are already witnessing.

The International Energy Agency in its global report for 2018 shows that the construction and building operations sector accounted for 36% of the final use of global energy and 39% of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, with 8% of these emissions being linked to the cement industry alone. If the cement industry were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of CO₂ in the world with up to 2.8 billion tons, only surpassed by China and the United States. It becomes urgent then, to question the clear unsustainability of the predominant construction model that is based on

industrialized materials (especially cement, steel, aluminium), and the need to look for more energy efficient ways to build.

For thousands of years, the natural environment has been used by humans to transform the materials found in the environment itself and generate with them construction systems adapted to the geological, climatic, topographic and cultural conditions of the different regions. Thanks to this, in the world, there is a built heritage constructed with earth and other natural materials that has been preserved over the centuries and still constitutes a viable option for millions of people, since the use of local natural materials has a level of energy expenditure and minimum CO2 emissions due to the zero or short transportation required and simple processing.

In this context, we demand that the States commit themselves to support the construction with local materials through:

1. Promoting the preservation of diversity in the constructive culture of the people and with it the recognition, use and valorisation of local materials and traditional construction systems as an ethical, social and environmentally responsible alternative.
2. Promoting public policies aimed at fostering the use of local materials and the conservation of constructive cultures in housing and habitat programs and projects promoted by the States.
3. Quantifying the loss and gain in the use of traditional construction systems and local natural materials in the counting of emissions and mitigation actions. There is potential savings in preserving built homes.
4. Producing and creating reserves of local construction materials based on natural resources such as wood, stone, earth and natural fibbers to increase resilience to disasters that place the most disadvantaged population at serious risk.
5. As part of the mitigation actions, it is essential to recognize the right to a habitat construction in continuity with the local tradition, with local materials associated with adapted techniques that promote the improvement of the local economy by providing employment to the producers of materials and construction workers
6. Encouraging scientific research for the care of the environment from the production of local materials and homes, the improvement in the earthquake resistance of traditional construction and the massive training of self-builders in improved construction techniques.
7. Support from the states (local municipalities, regions) to the creation of local companies that develop the production of local materials, which allows their use in massive building programs.

8. Generating and disseminating sufficient information on the environmental costs of the production and use of construction materials for better decision making. Mandatory incorporation of building energy codes and certification policies.
9. Encouraging the analysis of the life cycle (calculation of energy expenditure, CO2 and water consumption) of each edification that is built and ensure environmental remediation in the territory that suffers. Make evident the ecological footprint of the materials and of the use of our homes and infrastructure.
10. Routing scientific research and finding alternatives to the use of binders (cement) and other highly polluting materials and set goals for effective reduction of their production and use. Optimize not only the materials but also the production processes in terms of performance and environmental sustainability
11. Promoting the notion of circular economy and endogenous development in the production of housing and infrastructure.



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