



United Nations Sustainable
Development Summit 2015

Statement by
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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to congratulate the distinguished delegates for their diligence in formulating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the inspirational Sustainable Development Goals.

UN-Habitat welcomes the progress that has been made since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and the increasing recognition of the vital role of urbanization in achieving sustainable development. This role is reflected strongly in SDG-11 to 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.

The world is rapidly urbanizing. Today, over half the global population lives in urban areas, which will accommodate an additional three billion people by 2050—70 per cent of the world's population. Most of this growth will take place in developing countries.

Cities are engines of growth and job creation. They are responsible for 80% of global GDP. **And when they are well planned, well governed and well financed, cities can and do drive national economic growth.** Indeed no country has ever reached middle-income status without proper urbanization.

It is critical to understand that **good urbanization** is not a passive outcome of growth. It is a *driver* of growth. When endogenous resources are unlocked, a positive cycle of investment in infrastructure and services is unleashed. Urbanization always generates economic value, though its value and costs are not always equally shared.

However, the advantages of urbanization are not guaranteed. Without appropriate legislation, good planning and adequate financing, cities can fail their populations. The problem that we face nowadays is that most of the new urbanization is **spontaneous and unplanned**. Therefore, instead of positive outcomes, it often yields negative externalities such as congestion, sprawl and segregation.

Good urbanization does not come by chance. It comes by design. Underlying the wide diversity of human settlements, there are three common measures.

They are: first, adequate **rules and regulations**, which govern people living close together and sharing common services; second, better **spatial planning and design**, which optimize density, connectivity and diversity; and third, a **financial plan**, which sustains the functioning of the city and ensures economic prosperity.

These three measures cannot be achieved through sectors alone. Only the collective government of the city can effectively oversee its common elements, including public space. **Local governments** therefore have a preeminent role to play. They are at the level closest to the people, to whom they have the greatest accountability. Local governments also need support from higher levels of government, through frameworks such as **National Urban Policies**.

Excellencies, **there will be no sustainable development without sustainable urban development**. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the power of urbanization to transform the current paradigm. And it gives cities a clear role in this transformation.

In Paris this December, a **climate agreement** is expected to point the way toward implementing one part of the agenda, including the requisite commitments and resources. Here too, cities have a role; not only as contributors to and victims of climate change, but in providing potential solutions.

Next year, in October 2016, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) will be held in Quito, Ecuador. It will be the first global summit following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and, hopefully, a new climate agreement COP-21.

Its preparatory process has already opened debate and engagement around the world about how we should build, plan and manage cities and achieve sustainable urbanization. Another important debate is taking place on how local, regional and national governments should be involved for an action-oriented implementation. A broad base is forming for a successful outcome in 2016: a New Urban Agenda that will guide us in the coming decades.

I thank you for your attention.