

1st meeting of the Preparatory Committee - UN Habitat III

Statement by Brazil

On behalf of the Brazilian Government, I would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General of the Conference for organizing this first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development - Habitat III. We thank you for your report on the preparations for the Conference and on the progress in the implementation of Habitat II and new challenges.

The holding of the conference in 2016 could not be more opportune. For the first time in history, more than half of the global population lives in cities, and this number will keep increasing in the foreseeable future.

Also for the first time, the phenomenon of urban expansion has become much more relevant to developing countries. In fact, 95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in the developing world. This is particularly the case in our region, where it is estimated that by 2050, 91,4% of South America's population will be residing in cities.

Urbanization has a major transformative impact on economic growth, poverty reduction and the empowerment of citizens. It also embodies the main problems that can only be overcome by sustainable development. The world's cities occupy just 2 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for between 60-80 per cent of energy consumption, and 75 per cent of carbon emissions. It is also in cities that social and economic inequalities reach their highest levels.

We believe adequate urban planning is an essential requirement for enabling cities to fully play their role as drivers of sustainable development in all its dimensions. This is reflected in Brazilian urban development policies adopted at all levels, which are today strongly focused on inclusion. We hope such a perspective can be thoroughly discussed in the preparatory process for the Conference, and, of course, reflected in its outcome.

Fully exploiting the dividends of a plural democracy, the Brazilian government has tapped into participatory policy formulation and implementation, while investing meaningful resources in public policies for the less empowered, the needy and the poor, to the benefit of all.

The national social housing program "My House My Life" is currently undergoing its third expansion. In the first two phases, implemented during the last five years, we set the goal of building 3.7 million houses nationwide,

of which 1.6 million have already been delivered and another 2 million are currently in advanced stages of production. Discussions are ongoing in respect of extending the program up to 3 million more houses for the next years. The special Brazilian approach to the program can be noticed in the way organized social movements not only provide policy inputs during the formulation phases, but also actually participate, hands-on, in the construction of houses.

This emphasis in participatory engagement of a diversity of actors at the federal, state and local levels has proved effective and permeates even the institutional set up of official bodies involved, as can be perceived through the following recent measures:

- a) policy proposals finalized in July by the Technical Committee on Traffic, Transportation and Urban Mobility, within the scope of the Council of Cities, for the implementation of the National Pact on Urban Mobility;

- b) the establishment last June of a Commission for the Mediation of Urban Land Tenure Conflicts;

- c) the creation in July of a Working Group to prepare a preliminary report on sustainable urban development and formulate proposals for a new global urban agenda as part of preparations for Habitat III.

At the Rio+20 Conference, Governments acknowledged the need for a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements and adopted several commitments at the city level in the areas of housing, transportation, energy, multi- stakeholder participation and partnerships.

Brazil was glad that the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals adopted a stand-alone goal on "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities". Many of the solutions we seek to the challenges of sustainability, inclusion and sustainable growth will find an adequate and effective response only at the city level, with the engagement and participation of local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders. Brazil understands that we have to be as open and flexible as we can in this respect. The very composition of our delegation is an example, integrating a high representative from the Ministry for Cities, at the federal level, as well as local government representatives.

The Post-2015 Agenda, to be agreed upon in less than one year from now, should fully respect and build upon the decisions from Rio+20, contained in the outcome document "The Future We Want". We have made good progress since Rio with the 13 sessions of the Open Working Group and its groundbreaking outcome document containing 17 sustainable

development goals, agreed to by acclamation and adopted by the 68th GA as the main basis for the 2015 Summit. We can also draw from the report of the Committee of Experts on Financing for Sustainable Development and the Report of the Structured Dialogues on a Technology Facilitation Mechanism. Soon, the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report will be made available as an additional supporting element. Next July, in Addis Ababa, we will hold the third Conference on FFD as a follow-up to Monterey and Doha. It should provide critical additional elements for expanding and improving on the Means of Implementation for the Post-2015 development agenda. In all these agreements and processes the dimension of sustainable cities and human settlements will be present. Within this broader context, the subsequent holding of Habitat-III in 2016 will be a most welcome and timely occasion to put cities at the center of our collective efforts to build a new development paradigm.

The importance of the upcoming Conference, therefore, cannot not be overstated, Mr. Secretary-General. During preparations, we need to establish a mutually supportive nexus between work in Nairobi and developments in New York on the SDGs and the Post-2015 development agenda. We should aim for coherent, inclusive and transparent discussions.

I would also like to state Brazil's full support of Ecuador and Chile as GRULAC designated members of the bureau. We also fully support the offer of Ecuador to host the Conference in Quito. Ideally, at least one country from each region should be represented by a resident mission both in New York and in Nairobi. Effective participation of local and regional governments as well as civil society must also be ensured. Based on this understanding, we believe that the deadline for registration of stakeholder-representatives in the Conference has to be significantly extended. In concluding, cities and local authorities cannot be treated as mere implementing agents of decisions taken by central governments. They have a crucial role in the policymaking process and represent a fast growing segment of national populations. They need to be heard every step of the way under effective arrangements provided for in the modalities of the Conference, including through PGA sponsored debates and panels and UN multistakeholder exchanges. We need to be aware of their best achievements and most pressing challenges so that we are better equipped to meet the universal, ambitious and transformational sustainable development agenda set out in Rio for the future we want.

Thank you.