

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO PREPATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UN CONFERENCE ON  
HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HABITAT III)  
New York, 17 September 2014**

Your Excellency Mr. Diego Aulestia Valencia, Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, and Co-Chair of the PrepCom Bureau,  
Ms. Maryse Gautier, Ministry of Sustainable Development of France and Co-Chair of the PrepCom Bureau,  
Mr. Mamadou Mbodj, Permanent Mission of Senegal and Rapporteur of the PrepCom Bureau,  
Dr. Joan Clos, Secretary-General of Habitat III Conference and Executive Director of UN-Habitat,

Yesterday, we officially opened the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. I am pleased today to address this first session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development -- Habitat III.

We have with us many representatives of member states, organizations and major groups -- including local authorities -- civil society actors and other important leaders.

Welcome to New York and the United Nations Headquarters.

Almost two decades ago, at Habitat II in Istanbul, the international community resolved to make the most of the opportunities presented by human settlements and preserve their diversity to promote solidarity.

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, we committed ourselves to implement the Habitat Agenda, considering that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development, including adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development.

The world has changed dramatically since the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

More than ever before, we understand the power of well-planned urbanization for development.

But that is the key: planning – good, strong planning.

Half of the world lives in urban centers. By the middle of this century, more than two-thirds of humanity will be in cities and almost all growth will be in developing countries. Urbanization affects us all.

Urbanization is a driving force as well as a source of development. It has the power to change and improve the lives. Urban areas are at the heart of many great challenges, opportunities and promise.

As we work to formulate the post-2015 development agenda, the role of urbanization in supporting sustainable development is becoming increasingly important.

The United Nations should continue to promote equitable urban development in our human settlements, villages, towns, cities and countries.

This preparatory process towards Habitat III provides an excellent forum to unite the global community, through an exchange of dialogues about the progress made since Habitat II in 1996 and Istanbul +5 in 2001 – and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Let us learn from each other so we can replicate and scale up what works.

Habitat III will have an important role to play to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

I count on your strong engagement to pave the way towards Habitat III, sustainable urban development and a new urban agenda.

Thank you.

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