

U.S. Remarks for 12/1/2016 UN-Habitat Committee of Permanent Representatives Meeting

Thank you, Chair. Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, members of the UN-Habitat Secretariat,

The United States would first of all like to thank the UN-Habitat Secretariat and Habitat III Secretariat for their monumental efforts over the past years in preparation for and at the actual Habitat III conference itself and in helping member states reach consensus on the New Urban Agenda. The NUA which will help guide all stakeholders towards urbanization that is sustainable, resilient, inclusive, promoting good governance, and facilitating access to data and financing. . By drawing together committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the private sector in a cooperative partnership, the New Urban Agenda provides us an opportunity to set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities. The New Urban Agenda also provides an opportunity to translate the Paris Agreement, Agenda 2030, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development into local, tangible action.

We emphasize that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders, national and subnational governments as well as members of civil society and the private sector to make the New Urban Agenda a reality. We urge UN-Habitat to ensure, as it takes on its role as the focal point for the follow-up and review, that it properly reflects the essential efforts of all stakeholders.

The United States would also like to emphasize that member states all agreed in the New Urban Agenda that the upcoming assessment of UN-Habitat should be both evidence-based and independent. Without prejudging its outcome, we strongly oppose efforts that would reverse many of the reforms made in recent years. We also feel that any effort to increase UN Regular Budget allocations or move the organization towards universal membership would be ill-advised, weakening rather than strengthening the organization.

We think we speak for many in this room that we have been generally pleased with the direction UN-Habitat management has taken the organization in recent years in terms of its responsiveness to the Working Group on Program of Work and Budget, making the tough choices to reduce overall costs, increase efficiency as well as the steps it is taking to address member state concerns about its transparency and effectiveness, such as by starting to implement several of the recommendations of its 2014 OIOS evaluation. However, UN-Habitat must recognize that its financial viability and future heavily depends on its ability to be fiscally responsible and transparent, to sustain and build on reform efforts and to demonstrate to traditional and non-traditional donors real and measurable results in its normative and field work.

UN-Habitat can play an important role in advancing the New Urban Agenda, which is why it has been deeply troubling in recent months to find that it is facing an imminent financial shortfall with regards to its core budget. Although some of this could be attributed to external factors, we emphasize here the need to adjust the budget to existing realities and not overly

optimistic assumptions. Many of you already know that the United States remains a strong supporter of UN-Habitat both as a core donor and in funding major projects in the field. We have been actively working to help UN-Habitat find the best way forward given its current financial shortfall, but it is clear that we cannot solve these problems without the support of other member states. It is true that UN-Habitat must be accountable, transparent, and provide assurances to member states going forward. It is also true that without member state support; UN-Habitat will need to make substantial cuts in its core operations that will almost certainly impact its ability to deliver on its field operations. It was clear after several rounds of difficult negotiation that many of you here wanted UN-Habitat to play an important role in the advancement of the New Urban Agenda; if this remains the case, we strongly urge all member states to take responsibility for the organization and to contribute to its core resources.

Thank you, Chair.