

**United Nations Habitat Assembly**  
**One UN Dialogue**  
**28 May 2019; 1:15 – 2:45; Conference Room One**

**Opening Remarks of the Executive Director**  
(estimated time of remarks: 13:30 – 13:35)

**1. Welcome**

Honorable President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly  
Honorable State Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Government of Sweden  
Under Secretary-General and Secretary-General of UNCTAD  
Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director of UN Environment  
Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Kenya  
Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA  
United Nations Resident Coordinators of Bolivia, Kenya, Montenegro, and Bahrain  
Distinguished delegates to the United Nations Habitat Assembly  
Representatives of various agencies of the United Nations  
Participating mayors, local government officials, business leaders, youth, professional associations, academics, and women’s organizations.  
Ladies and gentlemen

**2. Thanks to the SG/DSG**

I am grateful to the SG and DSG for their commitment. They have taken steps to prioritize urbanization as a “mega trend.” They have encouraged my counterparts in other agencies to work with me to improve how we support member States to achieve sustainable urban development. They are calling for a “whole-of-system” approach, recognizing that urbanization is essential for the attainment of the SDGs.

**3. Outcomes**

An important aspect of the system-wide strategy are the outcomes it has prioritized. By accomplishing SDG 11, we can contribute to the achievement of urban-related targets of associated goals. Similarly, there are “urban critical” goals that are necessary if we are to ensure urban development is sustainable. To promote greater coherence across the UN system, the strategy identifies four key outcomes: equality/poverty eradication, prosperity and economic growth, climate action and environmental protection, and crisis response and prevention. It is towards these four shared outcomes that we must orient our work.

**4. New Urban Agenda**

The systemwide strategy notes that the New Urban Agenda was endorsed by Member States at the Habitat III Conference in Quito in 2016. And that it provides an implementation framework encompassing four drivers of change that member States can apply to promote sustainable urban development. The New Urban Agenda is therefore an agenda that all UN agencies can utilize to advance the urban dimension of their respective mandates, be it health, education, food, sanitation, refugees, children, or culture.

**5. National Urban Policies**

Among the key drivers for sustainable urban development are national urban policies. These offer governments, businesses, sub-national, and non-State Actors opportunities to ensure balance territorial development. They can address historical spatial inequalities among regions within a country, as well as within individual sub-national territories. National urban policies can as well serve as investment plans for infrastructure designed to network cities and foster stronger urban-rural linkages.

## **6. Multi-Level Governance Mechanisms**

Another set of drivers for sustainable urban development are institutional arrangements and legislation that facilitate cooperation among national, regional and local governments. Many countries face challenges aligning investments at different levels of government with the effect of poor resource distribution and spatial inequality. Vertical governance mechanisms, reinforced by enabling legislation, help governments translate policy into action. They foster connectivity among cities and between urban and rural areas, effectively channeling public investments in infrastructure, basic services and affordable housing.

## **7. Urban Planning and Design**

Urban planning is a third key driver for sustainable urban development. Poorly managed urbanization has resulted in many cities in which upwards of 60% of the residents of the municipality lack access to basic services, land tenure security, affordable housing, transportation, and public space. For other cities, the absence of planning has led to land use patterns that segregate populations, drive up mobility requirements, and degrade the environment. Inclusive planning based on principles of multi-stakeholder consultation is essential if we are to promote equality, prosperity, climate action, and crisis prevention.

## **8. Financing Frameworks and Instruments**

In addition to urban policy, integrated governance and planning, a fourth driver of sustainable urban development is finance. The global resource requirements for infrastructure, basic services, transport and affordable housing are beyond the scope of any single source of financing. Member States need financing frameworks that mobilize multiple streams of financing, including domestic and international, public and private investment. Importantly, debt financing for infrastructure and basic services requires income for debt servicing. These depend on effective maintenance of land registries and on planned city extensions that capture the future value of undeveloped land. Other frameworks include financing facilities that align at country level the diagnostic/policy/capacity work of the UN with loan instruments of the international financial institutions.

## **9. Country Level Engagement, Regional Collaboration, and Inter-Agency Cooperation**

Distinguished delegates.

I am pleased that we have here today Resident Coordinators from Bolivia, Kenya, Montenegro, and Bahrain. I look forward to hearing from them about their experiences implementing the New Urban Agenda. I am keen to understand how they are organizing their

respective UN Country Teams, and how they are using sustainable urban development to promote equality, sustainable growth, climate action, and crisis prevention as envisioned by the UN in its systemwide strategy. I am also encouraged by the participation of my colleagues from the regional economic commissions. As we have just heard, the Deputy Secretary-General is committed to integrating the regional economic commissions and the UN development system knowing that together they can support UN Country Teams and cross-border initiatives. In this regard, I welcome learning from the experiences of ESCWA. I would like as well to welcome my peers from UNCTAD and UNEP. Their work on economic development and the environment, respectively, is essential to the implementation of the systemwide strategy on sustainable urban development. I look forward to their ongoing cooperation and partnership.

Thank You