



**The Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**

First open-ended high-level midterm review meeting

29 June - 1 July 2021

**Opening statement
on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

- Chair, Madam Executive Director, distinguished colleagues, it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement
- The EU and its Member States would like to congratulate the Bureau of the CPR and the UN-Habitat Secretariat for the successful preparation of the first open-ended high-level meeting of the CPR, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We would also like to express our appreciation for UN-Habitat's efforts and successful mobilisation of resources for a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We see a need for prioritising this work area during the pandemic and a post-pandemic period.
- For the meeting ahead of us, the EU and its Member States look forward to this important opportunity to conduct the midterm review of the Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat, which was adopted by the Habitat Assembly for the period

2020-2023, and to agree necessary recommendations for its full implementation.

- We also appreciate the foreseen discussion regarding to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda for which UN-Habitat is a focal point in the UN system. Allow me to share, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a few thoughts and our experience in this respect.
- The continuous implementation of the New Urban Agenda is of the utmost relevance in order to keep promoting sustainable and integrated urban development. In the EU, numerous actions have been taken through policies, initiatives and projects. We are convinced that contributions to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda should take multiple forms, notably through investments, but also support to improve governance and partnerships as well as support to data collection and harmonisation to evaluate the progress globally.
- Our cities are hubs of proximity economy, knowledge generation, community engagement and innovation. They can deliver solutions closer to the local businesses and citizens notably through boosting local value chains, and focusing on human-centric city models¹.
- An important point to underline too, with regard to supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, is addressing challenges and opportunities in rural areas, which are crucial for the development of urban areas. Urban and rural areas cannot be opposed: they do need each other to develop in a sustainable way. This is of particular importance in view of the resilience of food systems, especially in situations where more remote rural

¹ E.g. “15-minute city” or the “last mile” delivery of services.

areas are depopulating and urban periphery areas are experiencing conflicts over land use.

- We would like to highlight a new framework adopted by the EU and its Member States and supported by the European Commission - the New Leipzig Charter. It emphasises the ‘common good’ for better quality of life in cities and sets up key principles of integrated and place-based approach; multi-level governance; as well as participation and co-creation.
- This concept is fully aligned with the New Urban Agenda to support the development of urban policies at appropriate level, to strengthen urban governance, and reinvigorate long-term and integrated urban and territorial strategies. It also takes into account the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis².
- Maintaining the long-term perspectives, and in particular sustaining the green and digital transitions, should be of utmost importance. The EU will be supporting this approach through its Cohesion policy for the programming period 2021-2027³.
- In the context of EU development cooperation, the EU provides substantial assistance through a multitude of programmes and channels to its partner countries and cities to support sustainable urban development and the implementation of the UN New Urban Agenda. Support for city-to-city partnerships has allowed strengthening of exchanges between cities in partner countries and those in the EU.
- The programming of support under the European Union’s future Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

² The EU is also undertaking a renewal of its Urban Agenda and we will ensure that this instrument continues to support the implementation of the Leipzig Charter on the ground while renewing and updating the specific Voluntary Commitments.

³ The new and horizontal policy objectives will be entirely dedicated to integrated sustainable urban and territorial development, to direct investments so as to leave no place and no one behind by offering place-based adapted growth solutions directly at the local level.

(NDICI) for the period 2021-2027 is ongoing, where many of the country programmes will include a stronger focus on sustainable urban development, advancing the external dimension of the European Green Deal. The foreseen scaling up of the innovative financial instruments under the European Fund for Sustainable Development+ will provide additional scope for supporting investments in sustainable urban development.

- Finally, the EU and its Member States are committed to support the monitoring of the SDGs at urban and territorial level through Voluntary Local Reviews. The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), launched in Abu Dhabi, offers a useful framework to set up local monitoring frameworks, produce evidence-based reviews and eventually direct public investments⁴.
- We will take the opportunity of the 11th World Urban Forum, taking place on European grounds, to share more information on the EU support to the New Urban Agenda implementation and spell out these policies and initiatives to a wider audience.

I thank you.

⁴ The European Commission is collaborating with a group of European cities that are testing the use of the Handbook and the proposed indicators. The progress report of this activity will be published by fall 2021 and a second edition of the Handbook is foreseen by June 2022.