



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS
MEMBER STATES**

25TH SESSION OF UN-HABITAT GOVERNING COUNCIL

NAIROBI (17-23 APRIL 2015)

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(OPENING STATEMENT)

Mister President, Distinguished Ministers and Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States for this 25th Governing Council of UN-Habitat.
2. The European Union and its Member States express their deepest condolences to the families of the victims and those injured in the terrorist attacks in Garissa. The EU High Representative and Vice-President Federica Mogherini made a statement to this regard in which she reiterated the EU commitment to supporting the Government and the people of Kenya in overcoming the threat from the terrorism.
3. I wish to congratulate you Prof. Jan Ilavsky on your election as President of this Governing Council. I would like to also thank UN-Habitat for hosting this 25th Governing Council meeting back-to-back with the Second Preparation Committee of the Third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements to be held in Quito in 2016.
4. By the middle of the 21st century it is estimated that seventy percent of the world population will live in urban areas. The proportions between rural and urban populations have therefore dramatically evolved over the last sixty years. Over the next 20 years the fastest growing urban areas will be in Asia and Africa. Urban slums still house a third of the urban population in the context of this unprecedented urbanisation. This situation and this prospect impose upon us all immense responsibilities but also present major and hopeful opportunities.
5. Our meetings these days in Nairobi take place in the context of a year 2015 during which major UN conferences (*on Disaster Risk Reduction, last March; on Financing for Development in July; on Sustainable Development Goals in September; on Climate Change in December*) will shape and influence the discussion around the future global urban agenda and Habitat III more generally. They should result in an ambitious agenda, which leaves no-one behind, with all countries and stakeholders playing their full part. Without pre-empting the outcomes of those processes, the EU and its Member States realise the critical momentum around urban issues and challenges.
6. In this context, the EU believes the future global Urban Agenda should address both the challenges and opportunities raised by urban development. The EU believes it should be

focused and result-oriented. It should be a truly global and transformative agenda that brings together, in a balanced fashion, all three pillars of sustainable development. Our approach is guided by the vision of well-managed, sustainable and liveable cities.

7. The European Union and its Member States welcome the Special Theme of this biennial Governing Council session – *“The contribution of UN-Habitat to the Post-2015 development agenda: promoting sustainable urban development and human settlements”* – as well as its two sub-themes – *“Enhancing urban-rural linkages across the continuum of human settlements to harness the transformative power of urbanization for sustainable development”* and *“The role of UN-Habitat in the post-2015 development agenda”*.
8. Sustainable development does not stop at the limits of cities, no matter their size. The European Union and its Member States see the reality of rural-urban linkages through the existing urban-rural continuum and the urban-rural complementarity of functions and flows of people, culture, capital, goods, services, employment, information and technology. We are of the view that well-managed urban-rural partnerships can ensure a high degree of self-sustainability of metropolitan areas, limit urban sprawl and prevent rural depopulation. We stress the mutually reinforcing rural-urban linkages when addressing food security challenges, and we strongly support the role of local authorities. Without taking away our attention from specific urbanisation-related targets, the new Urban Agenda should address urban-rural linkages.
9. Regarding the second sub-theme, the European Union and its Member States recognise the role UN-Habitat played so far in providing expertise and inputs to the discussions around the Post-2015 development agenda. While we are confident that urban-related issues will figure prominently in the new global development agenda, it is important not to pre-empt September discussions in New York. We are convinced that it is crucial for all of us to make sure that UN-Habitat is fit for purpose, in order to respond more efficiently to future challenges.
10. The European Union and its Member States strongly believe that the governance structures of UN-Habitat require a fundamental change to ensure a more efficient and functioning relationship between the Secretariat and the membership. Strengthened and continuous, “intersessional”, oversight should be a key priority while minimising additional costs and avoiding supplementary bureaucracy layers. We stand ready to

engage actively on this issue during the present Governing Council discussions on the reform resolution.

11. To conclude, I would like to express the appreciation of the European Union and its Member States for the preparatory work carried out by the Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos, and his team for the Governing Council. We would also like to thank the Committee of Permanent Representatives for its preparatory work.

I thank you