



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

2nd Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) – 14-16 April 2015

Agenda item 6: Progress to date in the implementation of the outcomes of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and identification of new and emerging challenges on sustainable urban development

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Under Secretary General Clos, Ministers, Excellences, Dear colleagues

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The European Union and its Member States are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to important discussions on the new global urban agenda and the lead-up to the Habitat III conference in October 2016.

First of all, let us put this agenda in the context of several crucial conferences taking place this year that will prepare the ground for Habitat III, such as the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted last month in Sendai, the UN International Conference on Financing for Development which will take place in July, in Addis Ababa, the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York in September and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in December in Paris.

The outcomes from these four major UN conferences should result in an ambitious agenda, which leaves no-one behind, one that is truly global and universal, with all countries and stakeholders playing their full part. All these conferences will shape and influence the "New Urban Agenda" to be defined by Habitat III.

As one of the first conferences that were organised after the UN Summit for the adoption of the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the Habitat III should build on the framework and content provided by the Post-2015 process. In the Habitat III Conference, we will be committing ourselves to a new urban agenda at the global level which should play an important role in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. We should do our utmost to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, as outlined in the present OWG proposal for sustainable development goal 11.

We warmly thank the Kenyan authorities and the UN office in Nairobi for hosting this timely meeting back-to-back with the 25th UN Habitat Governing Council. This should ease our work and

improve global coherence and consistency between the process of preparing for Habitat III next year and future orientations of UN Habitat, in a cost effective manner.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

Cities and urban development play an increasingly important role in EU policies, within the European Union, as well as in its external dimension. It is no coincidence that the EU wants to be an active partner in the HABITAT III process. We see an urban agenda at the EU level as a prerequisite for achieving our ambitions of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and we see a global urban agenda as primordial for our global sustainability ambitions.

I would like to underline that a number of successful EU initiatives that are being applied and or extended to the international development context for urban development such as the *Covenant of Mayors*¹, which is a major network of more than 6.000 cities committed to reducing their CO2 emissions beyond binding EU Energy and Climate commitment levels. This initiative is now complemented by '*Mayors Adapt*', a Covenant of Mayors Initiative on Climate Change Adaptation set up by the European Commission in 2014 to engage cities to take action to adapt to climate change.

Local authorities are largely responsible for implementing EU directives and manage around 30% of EU public investment. Cities and urban areas are involved in implementing (or are directly affected by) two thirds of EU sectoral policy. EU Regional Policy illustrates this case in point perfectly. For the period 2014 to 2020, around €15 billion will be invested in '*integrated actions to tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges affecting urban areas*' with cities leading implementation. Additional EU investments will address challenges that are very important for cities, such as energy efficiency, sustainable urban mobility, improving the urban environment, as well as actions supporting regeneration and improving social inclusion within deprived urban communities.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

The New Urban Agenda should build upon the lessons learned from previous Habitat processes, while focusing also on tackling new challenges, inter alia climate change or unprecedented rapid growth of urban populations. The outcome document of Habitat III conference should make concrete suggestions on how to address the challenges raised by urbanisation, including mapping issues that should enable "sustainable urban development" to be endorsed by all and the proposal for a balanced approach in terms of economic, social cultural and environment dimensions.

Reaffirming the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the safety of women and girls must be included within the framework of the new global urban agenda.

The new agenda should address both the challenges and opportunities raised by urban development. It must be focused and result-oriented, in order to facilitate its implementation and

¹ <http://www.covenantofmayors.eu>

monitoring towards a future oriented, sustainable development. It should be a truly universal and transformative agenda that brings together and fairly balances all three pillars of sustainable urban development.

Four strands of action guide our future approach:

1. **Promoting innovative and productive cities:** by increasing the attractiveness of cities with a focus on innovation, inclusiveness, sustainability, improvement of youth and gender perspectives and job creation through entrepreneurial-friendly environments. Cities are the engines of national economies. Boosting the endogenous potential of cities is one of the ways to foster local economies and stimulate employment. This is what is meant by ‘productive cities’.
2. **Promoting green, compact and resilient cities:** by enhancing efficient use of resources in urban areas (i.e. energy, land, mobility, waste, water, etc.), reducing resource consumption, improving air quality, improving cities' resilience to flooding, heat waves and natural hazards as well as ensuring transition towards sustainable urban mobility.
3. **Promoting inclusive cities:** by addressing multiple aspects of urban poverty and exclusion. Ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, affordable and basic services for all alongside job creation and sustainable growth. The empowerment of women and improved gender equality in the urban context will be a policy priority for EU international development and cooperation support.
4. **Promoting good urban governance:** by supporting capacity building of local authorities to design and implement integrated and sustainable urban development policies by empowering all relevant levels to establish legislative frameworks and consolidate a shared knowledge basis. Where necessary, action shall focus on sustainable urban planning and design as well as institutional support to strengthen and enhance decentralisation processes.

This four pillar approach is geared towards the vision of a well-managed, sustainable and “liveable city”. It reflects the renewed political willingness of the EU to place a strong emphasis on job creation, gender equality and improving the management of legal migration.

The preparation for Habitat III cannot be done by national governments alone. We need to underline the importance of the responsibilities incumbent on all Habitat agenda partners, in particular local authorities, civil society, including non-governmental organisations, private sector and other stakeholders. Local actors and other relevant parties need to be enabled and actively engaged in this preparatory process and in the conference, and together, we should form a global partnership for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

I thank you