

Co-chairs, Excellences, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- First of all, I would like to express, on behalf of the Czech Republic, the acknowledgement to the team of Executive Director Dr. Clos and the Bureau members for the organization of this event and for the preparation of all the documents.
- Second, the Czech Republic sees the Habitat III process as an excellent opportunity to discuss globally and thoroughly possible responses to our common challenges, as well as the implementation of sustainable development goals in the framework of the “Post-2015” agenda. As proposed in Goal 11 concerning cities as inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable places to live, governments should actively support access to housing and relevant services, urban planning, safe public spaces, sustainable building methods, etc.
- It is my pleasure to confirm that these targets are highly recognized in the Czech Republic – rather urbanized country, where about 80% of ten million inhabitants live in cities. Since most from more than six thousand municipalities are very small villages, regional and local levels of self-government are very important to manage territorial and urban development in an efficient and tailored-made way, reflecting real needs of citizens. The principal of partnership is of high importance for the Government, when conceiving any development policy.
- It is my great pleasure to inform you briefly about the UN regional conference “UN European Habitat”, which the Czech Republic has offered to host in Prague in March next year, as part of the preparatory process for Habitat III conference. Therefore, the “UN European Habitat” would be, for the first time, a meeting in the framework of the UN-Habitat in the Czech Republic. The proposed topic is “Sustainable Housing in Liveable Cities”, as adequate and safe housing plays a key role in human quality of life in general. Fifty six national delegations of UNECE Member States should gather in Prague; together with representatives of many partners, such as representatives of non-governmental organizations, professional chambers, associations of municipalities, academia, research, business, etc. Another objective of the “UN European Habitat” conference would be greater visibility of links with other UN bodies and other intergovernmental organizations such as the EU, OECD, Council of Europe, etc. The conference should also include a half-day ministerial segment in its agenda, with the aim to agree on a ministerial “Prague Declaration”, supplementing the “The UN Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing”, and expressing the political will of the participating UNECE Member States to support improvement of urban living conditions, in particular with regard to housing.
- So I look forward to welcoming some of you in Prague, next year.
- Thank you for your attention.