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## **Habitat III PrepCom 2, 14-16 April 2015, Nairobi**

### **Agenda Item 6.**

### **Progress to date in the outcomes of the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the New Urban Agenda**

#### **Statement by Finland**

Thank you Mme. Chairperson,

Distinguished Ministers, Excellences, delegates,

I would like to state Finland's full alignment with the statement of the EU and its Member States.

The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is to address key challenges of our time. As urbanization proceeds at an increasingly rapid pace, we cannot afford to continue business as usual. There is an urgent need to revisit the Habitat Agenda. Therefore, we hope that this preparatory meeting will take us one step further in elaborating the contents of the New Urban Agenda, which should guide our future actions for the next twenty years.

Urban planning can provide a powerful tool for paving the way for sustainable development. It is therefore encouraging that sustainable cities and human settlements have been well reflected in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. Habitat III will provide an important vehicle for operationalizing the SDGs. In this regard the proposed goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable is, in particular, important. Cities have a crucial part in mitigating climate change and play a vital role in the implementation of the new Climate agreement.

With regard to the challenges we are facing, Finland would like to highlight some key ingredients for contributing to sustainable urban development. Urgent action is needed in promoting integrated planning, increasing resource efficiency, balancing the rural-urban nexus and ensuring gender equality. In addition, the ageing world presents increasing challenges to urban planning.

An integrated approach is essential in the planning of housing, land use and transportation. It improves living conditions, safeguards green spaces and increases resource and energy efficiency.

Finland has taken promising steps in integrated planning through Agreements of Intent between the government and municipalities. In these Agreements the city regions promise to increase the density of city structure and construct more public housing in cooperation with neighboring municipalities. This approach includes the development of urban, peri-urban and rural areas together.

The gender perspective requires more attention in urban planning. In Finland, for example, two-thirds of the users of public transport are women, as well as the vast majority of pedestrians. Despite this, assessing the gender impacts of transport policies, or urban development policies, in general, is not a common practice.

The ageing of society has many far-reaching impacts which should be reflected in the New Urban Agenda. As the demographics change, we need to focus on improving the well-being, housing conditions, services and accessibility of the elderly. In addition, there are various other population groups - such as children and the handicapped - which require more emphasis in urban planning.

Mme. Chairperson, the Habitat III Conference should become a milestone in the history of sustainable urban development and provide a global vision and concrete steps in making cities more livable for all. To succeed, we need to strengthen the global partnership for this process. We have to join our efforts and engage all decision making levels, as well as actors from the wide spectrum of the civil society. In that way we will achieve an action-oriented New Urban Agenda which is truly universal and will yield world-wide commitment.

Thank you