

**U.S. Statement During the Plenary of the Second Session of Habitat III Preparatory Committee
As Prepared for Delivery by
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Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you also to the Secretary-General of the Conference and the Secretariat for organizing this Second PrepCom.

The United States welcomes this Second PrepCom for Habitat III. We look to Habitat III in October 2016, as well as the entire Habitat III preparatory process, as an opportunity to reflect back on what has been accomplished since Habitat II, to engage in the global conversation around sustainable and inclusive communities in an increasingly urban world, and to inform and extend the impact of our domestic work. The United States stands ready to play a constructive role in meetings this week and PrepCom 3 next July to help ensure that Habitat III is an impactful event that can convene new and thoughtful voices and leverage the innovation and dynamism for which cities are known.

The United States recognizes the critical importance of the urbanization trend domestically and globally as an engine of economic growth, innovation and sustainable development. Specific challenges exist to creating sustainable and inclusive communities in metropolitan areas, yet these urban settings also provide tremendous opportunities for individuals and families, as well as their larger communities. Among the issues to confront, cities have a critical role to play in mitigating climate change, building resilient infrastructure, combatting social and economic inequality, fostering resilient communities around a sense of place, providing integrated and sustainable transportation systems, countering extremism, and ensuring that our communities are prosperous, healthy, and secure. An inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach for engaging residents around a multitude of issues will be critical to capitalizing on the opportunities of urbanization. These include: governance, infrastructure, financing, public services, water, environmental and health concerns, food security, education, jobs, transportation, and housing. It is also vitally important in our work that we respect and promote the rights of all as a social justice imperative, taking into account the voices and experiences of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including minorities, women, youth, immigrants, and indigenous populations.

With the majority of U.S. citizens living in metropolitan areas, and the majority of new population and economic growth occurring in urban areas, the United States is familiar with both the challenges and opportunities of governance across metropolitan regions; provision of adequate, affordable, and accessible housing; and creation of sustainable and inclusive communities. Integrated, cross-sector approaches to urban development, evidence-based policy, comprehensive land-use planning and design, public-private partnerships, and new approaches to financing and social investment all offer opportunities for tackling these complex urban challenges. We are eager to share our best practices and lessons learned, to learn from practices and policies globally, and to discuss ongoing and emerging trends and challenges through an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach.

The United States' preparatory process for Habitat III is fundamentally a bottom-up approach, driven by our engagement with local and regional practitioners, policymakers and professionals, as well as academia, advocacy groups, and government at all levels. The United States has convened a National Committee of federal government agencies and civil society groups, chaired by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro, and three subcommittees focused on (1) the National Report, (2) connecting the U.S. to global conversations, and (3)

education and outreach. The membership, plans, and thematic focus of each of the subcommittees are all reflective of the broad and inclusive process we are pursuing. We expect that the final U.S. National Report for Habitat III will build on the draft that has been submitted to UN Habitat and will incorporate challenges, successes, and lessons learned voiced by civil society partners and practitioners on the ground.

In the United States, sub-national governments play a fundamental role in responding to local needs of residents and building sustainable and inclusive communities. They are the entities most directly engaged in tackling these challenges, and in implementing policies and programs responsive to their contexts. The federal nature of the United States government further compels us to undertake this bottom-up approach. Most decisions about land use planning, community development, and housing – and many decisions about public health, environmental protection, transportation, education, crime, and other key issues – are made at the local level in the United States. Engaging local and regional practitioners in meaningful ways is critical for giving voice to local needs, reflecting on lessons learned, highlighting innovations, and inspiring future progress. We encourage other countries and delegations also to include a broad range of stakeholders and practitioners in their Habitat III preparations and delegations. Furthermore, we encourage the Habitat III conference in October 2016 to recruit and engage subnational actors, civil society groups, academics, advocates, and local and regional practitioners and politicians, at all levels and across sectors.

PrepCom 1, in New York City in September 2014, was an important kick-off to the larger Habitat III planning effort. Since then, we have organized the U.S. National Committee and subcommittees and currently are ramping up our efforts to complete our own preparations for Habitat III. We look to the work of this Second PrepCom to help guide all of us in our efforts leading up to Habitat III, especially over the next year. In the months ahead, we look forward to hearing about ways that we can provide additional feedback that will be helpful to the Secretariat's preparations for Habitat III. We are eager for this Habitat III preparatory process to build on discussion around other sustainable development processes, including on Disaster Risk Reduction, Financing for Development, the post-2015 Summit, and the UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris.

The United States wishes to express disappointment that many key issue papers were only made available to Member States on the eve of this PrepCom, preventing us from preparing and providing our own substantive reactions to them. We strongly urge the Secretariat to find a means to hear and consider the views of Member States on these documents and the reports of Policy Units in advance of composing the Habitat III outcome document zero draft.

We look forward to the discussions held in Nairobi this week during PrepCom 2 and during the UN Habitat Governing Council. We anticipate a productive exchange this week and continued close collaboration in the months ahead.

Thank you.