

Statement by Fiona Woo on behalf of the World Future Council Foundation, delivered in the Plenary Session on Wednesday 15 April at 16:10

Thank you Madame Co-Chair  
Secretariat of the Habitat III conference  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen

My name is Fiona Woo and I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Future Council. The World Future Council is a non-profit organisation that aims to bring the rights of future generations to the forefront of policymaking. The World Future Council is also a partner of the World Urban Campaign and of the General Assembly of Partners.

Madame Co-Chair, an urban revolution is sweeping the planet and is transforming the lives of billions of people. Urban areas dominate human economic activities. They are at the heart of global human interactions. In order to exist, cities require vast amounts of resources that are drawn increasingly from nature's global bounty rather than from their own backyard. Yet knowledge and prioritisation of ensuring the long-term availability of these existential supplies is lacking.

Humanity is currently depleting the natural capital stocks of the planet and eroding its resilience and capacity to regenerate. This is exacerbating global problems of climate change, soil degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Not surprisingly, cities and urban areas are major contributors to this trend. It is clear, then, that in order for urban development to be sustainable, it cannot continue to extract natural resources at a rate faster than ecosystems can recover. This trend must be reversed by improving the regenerative capacity of ecosystems.

Just as cities are victims and agents of climate change and environmental degradation, so too are they key players in being part of the solution.

The World Future Council recognises the integrated and interdependent relationship of the urban-rural continuum. Urban-rural linkages must therefore be strengthened in order to re-establish a mutually beneficial relationship between cities and their hinterland.

Ensuring that the surrounding territory also reaps the benefits of urban development is necessary to sustain urban life in the long term.

The unprecedented scale and scope at which cities consume resources and produce waste calls for a New Urban Agenda which allows cities to positively enhance the ecosystems they rely on. If urban areas are to continue to offer individuals around the world the prospect of an improved quality of life and ability to realise their potential and aspirations, they must recognise and embrace their role in ensuring that the earth's life support systems remain healthy and robust.

The New Urban Agenda must therefore ensure that cities follow a path of truly regenerative urban development.

Madame Co-chair, I invite the distinguished delegates of the Habitat III conference to acknowledge the voices of civil society and other stakeholders in the process of developing a New Urban Agenda.

I thank you very much for this opportunity to address the committee on behalf of the World Future Council.