

Transcription, Dr. Clos remarks during the Opening of the GC25 Friday April 17, 2015

Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya;

Honourable Mr. Jan Ilavasky, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, and President of the Governing Council;

Honourable Cabinet Secretaries; Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Honourable Fred Matiang'i, Acting Cabinet Secretary for Land, Housing and Urban Development of the Republic of Kenya.

Honourable ministers and heads of delegations

Distinguished members of the recently elected Bureau of the 25th session of the Governing Council,

Permanent Secretaries, Excellences,

Ambassador Michal Mlynar, the Chair of the CPR of UN-Habitat;

Esteemed members of the CPR,

Members of the media,

Partners and friends,

Ladies and gentlemen;

You have honoured us by attending this 25th Session of the Governing Council. I would like to begin by saying that this Governing Council is the last one before Habitat III. We are all called to present in Quito in October 2016 to celebrate the Habitat III conference - the Habitat conference that is celebrated every twenty years. In this Habitat III conference, we are going to evaluate the evolution of the urban agenda in the last twenty years; from Vancouver, 40 years ago then to Istanbul 20years ago then now to Quito.

We are also very grateful to all the delegations that have participated in the second preparatory committee of the Habitat III Conference for last three days. I would like to thank the contribution to the preparatory process and the efforts that you have done to congregate a number of agreements in order to celebrate a successful Habitat III. In this Habitat III conference, we will have the opportunity to review the mandate to UN-Habitat, the UN urbanization agenda and to think together about the future of urbanization.

As the Director-General has mentioned in the remarks of the UN Secretary-General, it is a very important moment because the UN family, Mr. President, is totally committed to the deliberations about the future of sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals were very important breakthroughs to the international community in achieving some specific measures of development, in order to alleviate some of the world's problems in terms of poverty, lack of good sanitation and other problems that our international community is suffering.

But now we are debating the Post-2015 sustainable development framework, since after the Rio+20 conference we needed to imagine new challenges, new objectives, and new aspirations for a just and decent development that guarantees equity, prosperity and well-being for the whole population.

At the same time, this is also the year of the COP-21 in Paris, to be held in December. We are all hoping that the breakthrough is going to happen in order to reach an agreement on the very complex issue of Climate Change.

After Kyoto, quite a number of years ago, to COP-21 a long process of negotiation has been taking place, but the international community and the world population needs an agreement in Paris this December. We also need an agreement where cities and urbanization should say something clear because the urban sector contributes 70% of greenhouse emissions on planet earth.

We need to stop and diminish these emissions, while improving the access to energy for the population in the developing world. We need to balance the equation, not an easy task, because the developing world needs energy. It is a right that they deserve. However, at the same time we need to guarantee that the ecosystems of the planet earth are preserved. If we don't balance the equation, we are not going to solve the problem.

In order to solve this problem, urbanization can contribute a lot because we can develop new models of urbanization where its contribution to climate change can be diminished. This is one of the challenges we have as UN-Habitat, as we propose both new ideas for sustainable development and for climate change.

Mr. President, we as UN-Habitat would like to give to the urban community of the world an optimistic message for urbanization. Urbanization has had bad reputation because it is very challenging. We know how difficult the process of urbanization is and the amount of problems that stem from it. However, we also know that visions of solving the problem are not enough to address the urban issues.

We need optimism. We need a vision. We need a strategy to overcome the problems of urbanization, because urbanization is a source of development. In urban settlements, be it small market towns or big metropolis, we attain the economies of scale. We see bigger markets. We see more specialization. All that is prosperity.

We need to merge the prosperity aspects of urbanization in order to overcome the externalities of urbanization: contamination, noise, congestion et cetera. In the balance of positive outcomes of urbanization and negatives of the externalities of urbanization, we need to strategize governance for the positive aspects to overcome the negative ones.

In order to be efficient in that direction, we need to have our minds in a positive mood towards urbanization. If we make urbanization the headache of every morning, then we are not going to have the clarity of mind to address the possibilities of urbanization.

Dear President, Africa today is in an urbanization phase. Asia has been leading the urbanization numbers in the last 40 years, mainly after the Second World War. We first saw Japan urbanizing in a

fantastic pace. Then we saw Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia urbanizing at a fantastic pace. Finally we saw China, and now India coming through a huge process of urbanization and industrialization.

Now, we are seeing Africa, with the economies of its countries growing at 7%, 8%, 9% and its urbanization is taking everybody by surprise. This is because we were used to seeing people moving in the cities where they are the economies of the nation, with \$2000/\$3000 per capita. People are now moving to the cities at \$500 per capita. That represents the new challenge for urbanization and in that sense it creates very spectacular possibilities to contribute to the sustainable development for a well guided process of urbanization in Africa.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your vision in trying to run this country in a fast development track and in a balanced process of urbanization.

Kenya has carried out one of the most interesting experiments in the world on decentralization. The constitution of Kenya has created the counties, 48 of them if I am not wrong. It has been a huge process of constitutional devolution to the citizens.

This is an experiment that is going on in its initial phases and everybody in the world is looking at how Africa and how some countries in Africa are taking advantage of this fantastic opportunity. I thank the president for his leadership in this process.

Urbanization has been linked to industrialization but now the world economy is changing. It seems that we already have too much of industrial capacity. The new sectors and the economy need the basic services; originally the primary sector like agriculture, extraction of natural resources then industrialization, and after industrialization we are seeing the explosion of services.

In this explosion of services, we are seeing that basic services play a specific role. Tourism, cultural services et cetera. In some way, the future development of Africa is going to be determined by how the transport sector, the industrial sector and the basic services sector are conjugated.

The important issue of the Basic Services economy, knowledge and finance sector is that they know cities very well. Urbanization is about investing for the future service sector, which is the most dynamic sector. Even in Kenya, the service sector has bypassed the other sectors in this sense. This is a big future opportunity.

We need optimism; we need strategy and vision for capturing the positive aspects of urbanization. We need to build from the challenges; we need to manage the problem. The mayors and the governments are going to fight for that.

We need the vision to design the way to capture the positive aspects of urbanization. This breakthrough is a change of paradigm that is going to emerge in Africa. I have a profound trust that this is something that is going to come out of the need for development of Africa.

You will be shocked to hear what the mean age of Nairobi is. It is 18 years. Can you imagine the challenge or, as the Chinese say, the opportunities of that reality?

This is what we would like to modestly contribute through our knowledge. With your collaboration through this international platform, this UN programme that is UN-Habitat, the global agency for sustainable urbanization based in Nairobi, based in Kenya and based in Africa.

This is our big opportunity, our honourable task, what we are passionate about and this is what allows me to thank you sincerely for your support; member states, governments, stakeholders, colleagues from the United Nations Madame Sahle Work-Zewde and Mr. Achim Steiner. Thank you very much to Kenya and thank you very much to the President.