

## **CANADA'S GENERAL STATEMENT ON HABITAT III ZERO DRAFT DECLARATION**

Merci Madame la co-présidente

Nous aimerions remercier et souligner l'excellent travail du Bureau ainsi que ceux qui ont travaillé de façon acharnée à la préparation d'Habitat III. Le Canada se voit ravi d'avoir l'occasion de fournir des observations initiales sur l'ébauche zéro de l'Agenda.

Tel que mentionné, les villes ont un énorme potentiel d'être le moteur de la croissance et du développement. Pour la première fois dans l'histoire, plus de la moitié de l'humanité vit dans les zones urbaines.

We know that by 2050, this number will reach nearly seventy percent, and with it will come significant social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental challenges as well as opportunities. This is why the Draft New Urban Agenda is a crucial step in helping guide us over the next two decades.

As we look to the Draft Declaration, it will be important to keep in mind the three main guiding principles:

1. to leave no one behind;
2. to achieve sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and
3. to foster ecological and resilient cities and human settlements.

### **Guiding Principle 1: leaving no one behind:**

Canada welcomes the inclusion and integration of gender equality into the New Urban Agenda and throughout the Zero Draft.

We must also keep in mind the most vulnerable, as well as those who are most disadvantaged including older persons, women and girls, youth, children, new immigrants, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ, and indigenous peoples to ensure that those who remain among the most vulnerable in, also stand to contribute immensely to, society. The New Urban Agenda provides an opportunity for a safer, more equal, and more just world for all. In that regard, we note with concern that the Zero Draft only contains two references to indigenous communities and not a single reference to the LGBTQ community. We urge the co-facilitators to address these shortcomings in the next version of the Zero Draft.

Canada would strongly recommend that these disadvantaged groups be more consistently recognized within the Declaration.

Yesterday, we celebrated the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biophobia. As a society, we have taken many important steps towards recognizing and protecting the legal rights of all persons to ensure that no one is left behind. We **must** continue on that front.

Canada is also concerned that the vulnerabilities related to homelessness in the New Urban Agenda could be further addressed throughout the document. Homelessness requires a collaborative approach as homeless individuals face many obstacles related to poverty; housing affordability; mental and physical health; labour market vulnerabilities; and skills, education and literacy levels.

Designing urban environments to promote and protect health and well-being is among the most important criteria for realizing livable and sustainable cities. Canada is pleased to see the inclusion of health and well-being in the Declaration which is a critical priority for many countries around the world, and is a cross-cutting factor that affects many other issues that impact well-being. However, we can do more. The Declaration presents an opportunity to reinforce the concept of health and well-being throughout the document to make greater links between urban development and the environmental determinants of health.

**Guiding Principle 2 - achieving sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all:**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action (AAAA), and the COP21 commitments for climate change, mark a historic moment and an opportunity for global change.

Canada values the New Urban Agenda as being a first step for providing a platform for the discussion of the Sustainable Development Goals at the global, regional, national, sub-national and local levels. In Particular, Goal 11, of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. There remains an opportunity as well to integrate other targets of Agenda 2030.

We also acknowledge that the New Urban Agenda makes note of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We strongly recommend that any references to human rights should focus on already agreed upon terminology and therefore caution the use of new language that has not been agreed upon such as the “right to the city”.

The New Urban Agenda provides significant opportunities for all levels of Government to engage in this universal agenda. However, we must keep in mind that Member States have differing governance structures, constitutional frameworks and divisions of responsibilities. Under Canada’s federal system, for example, some responsibilities are shared between the federal, provincial and territorial, and municipal levels of governments, such as health, housing, education and social assistance. Therefore, it is important for the text to recognize and accommodate this variety of jurisdictional arrangements.

Similarly, Canada cautions using prescriptive language with respect to transfers from national resources to sub-national and local governments. As previously mentioned, differing governance structures must be reflected, particularly with the the transfer of financial resources. We are also of the view that fiscal arrangements should reflect sub-national and/or local governments' capacities to raise revenues. We would therefore recommend language that would reflect national circumstances.

Canada is pleased to see that the Zero Draft makes multiple references to the inclusive participation of various stakeholders as being important actors for the New Urban Agenda. We emphasize the importance of building on these relationships. As we move forward with the Declaration, stakeholders, particularly references to private sector actors is crucial.

**Guiding Principle 3- fostering ecological and resilient cities and human settlements:**

Canada recognizes the important role that cultural and natural heritage including biodiversity and landscapes, play in defining the metropolitan identity of citizens and human settlements. Similarly, there is a need to protect, to rehabilitate and to promote resilient ecosystems. We welcome these additions in the Draft Declaration.

The scientific evidence is clear: climate change is one of the greatest threats of our time. We are pleased to see that climate change is reflected in the New Urban Agenda, but would recommend a stronger emphasis on energy efficiency, particularly as it relates to housing. As we have noted, there is a strong focus on the national role, but all levels of government, civil society, individuals, and private sector have a role to play in the solutions.

In the next few days, Canada looks forward to providing more substantive comments to support Habitat III objectives, in particular through achieving a more modern, cleaner economy and a more inclusive society.

In closing, we thank the co-facilitators for their excellent Zero Draft and we urge them to continue providing leadership and holding the pen as we move forward in this negotiation process.

Thank you/Merci