

Commissioner Crețu at the Opening Plenary Session of the United Nations Habitat Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

Quito, 18 October 2016

Speech by Commissioner Crețu, in charge of Regional Policy, at the Opening Plenary Session of the UN Habitat Conference in Quito, Ecuador

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Under Secretary General Clos, Ministers, Excellences,
Dear Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

I would like to thank Ecuador and the City of Quito, for hosting the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, and also extend my gratitude to everyone contributing to its successful preparation.

I am very pleased to take part in this historical Conference, where the New Urban Agenda will be adopted.

A New Urban Agenda, universal in scope, which reflects the world's shared vision and joint commitment to harness the extraordinary potential for sustainable development of the rapid urbanisation process, across its social, environmental and economic dimensions.

I welcome the New Urban Agenda, as a cornerstone in the implementation and localisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other milestone reform agendas of 2015, in particular the Paris Agreement.

I praise the New Urban Agenda, as an instrument that guides us in turning these challenges of global concern into powerful opportunities to ensure that no one is left behind.

The New Urban Agenda reflects the EU's vision for sustainable urban development, by calling for an integrated and place-based approach that takes into account the diversity of cities and their wider territorial context, while building on urban-rural linkages.

It keeps at its core human-rights based approach, and promotes the indivisibility and universality of human rights and women's empowerment, which is considered vital to achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

I am convinced that urban governance is key to achieving the ambitious paradigm shift called for in the New Urban Agenda.

The European Union and its Member States are already effectively working towards this vision.

We have adopted the Urban Agenda for the European Union which, based on a partnership approach involving cities and other stakeholders, aims at better including the urban dimension into EU policies. This means involving cities in the design of policies and mobilising cities in the delivery of policies.

This agenda seeks to promote more effective and efficient regulations, needs-oriented funding, more integrated policy-making and a better knowledge base and exchange process.

Thereby, the Urban Agenda for the EU is a key delivery instrument of the New Urban Agenda within the EU. It encompasses many of the same approaches and fundamental principles as the New Urban Agenda.

The European Union and the Member States are also committed to engaging with partners around the globe, to jointly address the challenges of urban poverty and exclusion, for the benefit of sustainable development in our partner countries overall.

I underline that this requires a significant change to policy-making, within and for urban areas, calling for a renewed commitment to strengthening the capacity of sub-national and local governments in all aspects of governance.

I underscore our will to strengthen their capacities, in particular in revenue generation and access to finance.

I furthermore commit to promoting sustainable spatial planning and the equitable management of land markets, as well as the development of sustainable, resilient and low-emission infrastructure networks.

We will also strengthen the data and statistical capacities at all governance levels.

Progress towards a global people-based definition of cities and human settlements may support this work.

The New Urban Agenda is the outcome of our joint efforts to formulate a truly transformative agenda.

It contains all elements needed to go beyond business as usual, and to localise the Sustainable Development Goals adopted last year.

Together we can bring the global New Urban Agenda to life and turn the global challenges of sustainable urbanisation into global opportunities for all.

Let us not miss this historical momentum.

Thank you very much

SPEECH/16/3469

Press contacts:

[Jakub ADAMOWICZ](#) (+32 2 29 50595)

[Sophie DUPIN DE SAINT-CYR](#) (+32 2 295 61 69)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)