

**UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
(Habitat III)
Informal intergovernmental negotiations on the draft outcome document of the Conference
UNHQ, New York
May 18, 2016**

**Intervention by Mr. Amit Narang, Counsellor,
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Thank you **Madam Co-Chair** for giving me the floor.

As a preparatory process for the Habitat III Conference enters into its final stretch, my delegation is happy to be participating today in this meeting of the intergovernmental negotiation process.

While detailed inputs on the outcome document from our Capital are awaited and we would convey them to you as we move into the outcome document; we are happy to share some of our preliminary inputs with you at this stage.

Before I do that, allow me to extend our commendations to you, to your fellow Co-Chair, to the members of the Bureau as also to the Secretariat for your painstaking efforts so far in carrying out a robust process of consultations for an ambitious outcome at Quito.

Having had the benefit of this wide-ranging and rather innovative process of consultations, as we move into the intergovernmental negotiations, we count on your leadership to ensure a Member State driven process for an intergovernmentally agreed outcome at Quito.

Madam Co-Chair,

With 50% of the world's population already living in cities, it is but to state the obvious that the future of our cities, or if I may say so - the cities of our future - will be key to the future of our planet.

Cities are economic engines. They are social melting pots. Cities also have a unique impact on the environment. For these reasons, cities are at the centre of our quest for sustainable development.

Madam Co-Chair,

We endorse the statement delivered earlier by the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77. In addition to that, I would like to share five broad points at this stage.

First, as other delegations have emphasized, the outcome document should avoid the tendency of 'one size fits all'.

We need to have an approach which speaks to the diversity of models as well as stages of urbanization in different parts of the world. This approach must also be relevant to both new as well as old urban settlements. While a lot of focus in our discussions has been on new urbanization which is happening mostly in Asia and Africa, it is important to recall that the developed world along with Latin America and the Caribbean is already 80% urban.

At the same time, much of the process of urbanization happening in developing countries like India is taking place in cities that already have a very long history, in some cases going back several centuries. We need to keep this diversity in mind as we craft the outcome document.

Our approach must also be inclusive and broad enough to be of value to the challenges of creating and managing sustainable cities in *both* developing and developed countries.

Sustainable urbanization is by no means a developing country issue. Existing and old urban settlements in developed countries have an equally important role to play through specific deliverables, especially by adopting and showcasing sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The foremost challenge in developing countries on the other hand, which are experiencing rapid urbanization at very low per capita income levels, is to create functioning cities that are able to provide to their urban citizens affordable access to better and adequate public services and job opportunities.

Our approach in Habitat-III must also avoid being over-prescriptive. The assessment and recommendations need to be tailored to suit specific situations and yet broad enough to encapsulate the policy challenges in different parts of the world.

Investments in cities and urban development, in our view, must focus on multiple results simultaneously along several streams such as housing, basic infrastructure, sanitation, education, sustainable production and consumption, employment, public transportation, etc.

In countries like mine, the foremost need is for enhanced investments in infrastructure, such as roads, water, sanitation, electricity, housing and basic services such as public transportation, schools and affordable health care.

Madam Co-Chair,

We also need to highlight the opportunity presented to us by technology. This is perhaps what is different when it comes to Habitat-III. Technology can help developing countries leap-frog to a better model of urban development.

In India for example, one of our flagship initiatives is that of ‘Smart Cities’. Launched by Prime Minister Modi, this initiative aims to harness the power of technology as means to create smart outcomes for citizens.

Secondly, we need to bear in mind the important linkage of this process with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

Indeed, we feel that the Habitat III comes at a very opportune time - just as world leaders have given us a new vision for sustainable development contained in SDGs. We feel that the outcome of the Habitat III is intimately linked with the SDGs.

The standalone urban goal in SDG 11 - which came about after a long process of consultation involving all stakeholders - should be seen as the foundation for the outcome document in Quito.,

SDG-11 should therefore be seen as an organic part of this outcome document and a fundamental jump-off point for our deliberations.

The outcome document should avoid the tendency of crafting new targets or to reinterpret or editorialize the contents of SDG-11.

Our aim should rather be to build-on SDG-11 and delve deeper into policy options and policy tools which can help us implement the objectives which we have agreed to as part of that goal.

In line with this, we also feel strongly that the outcome document of Habitat-III must fully respect all the principles which have been identified and agreed as part the 2030 Agenda.

The outcome document should also maintain a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, avoiding the tendency of giving pre-eminence to any one of them. In doing so, it must maintain its overarching focus on eradication of poverty which in the context of cities in developing countries remains a pressing task.

Third, rather than spending our time on new formulations of different rights and obligations, our focus should remain on ensuring universal and equitable access for all our citizens to basic services in cities.

Fourth, it is important that the outcome document does not just focus on national action but also and more importantly on international cooperation and support. Role of means of implementation in this regard is crucial.

Fifth and finally on the outcome document itself, while we do appreciate the fact that the zero draft of the outcome document is a result of a rather innovative and long process; we feel that now you have an opportunity to utilize the intergovernmental negotiation process to streamline the document.

It is quite important that you use the inputs from member states to enhance coherence in different parts of the documents, remove duplication and consolidate ideas. Hopefully when we have next iteration of the document, it will be a shorter and not a longer one!

Our aim of course, is to deliver a meaningful package, one that is useful not just to the practitioners of diplomacy in New York but more importantly to the practitioners of urban development back in our Capitals.

Madam Co-Chair,

To conclude, Prime Minister Modi, while launching the Smart Cities initiative, said “Urbanization should be viewed as an opportunity and urban centres should be viewed as growth engines”.

We very much hope that this will be the spirit which will guide the New Urban Agenda.

I thank you.
