

Speech by Mrs. Hadeel Binnajih
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The State of Kuwait
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*Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

1. On behalf of the Kuwait delegation and myself, I would like to express our thanks to the Republic of Ecuador and the City of Quito for hosting the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III); it is a pleasure and a privilege to be here to participate in presenting Kuwait's New Urban Agenda.
2. Kuwait is a city-state with a total landmass of 17,820 square kilometers; it is an urban country, administered by a central government, 98% of the population reside in residential districts and around the suburbs of Kuwait City, the capital of Kuwait. It is an oil producing country and a key member in both the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
3. The country's current oil production level accounts for 60% of its GDP and 95% of its total exports.
4. Kuwait was the first country to establish a sovereign fund in 1953. Now, the Fund, the sixth in rank, is worth around 592 billion US dollars.
5. To diversify its sources of funding, the country is pursuing a program of economic diversification that is set to re-energize the private sector and to activate the Public Private Partnerships (PPP).
6. In 2014, Kuwait established the "Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority" (KDIPA) to provide a one stop - shop to improve the investment environment and help increase the level of foreign direct investment inflows.

7. In order to strengthen local economic development and encourage participation in the private sector, the government in 2013 established The National Fund for the Development of Small & Medium Enterprise with a total capital of 6 billion US Dollars.
8. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, addressed attention on many occasions to support the Kuwaiti economy by keeping abreast of the latest economic developments around the world, and called for eliminating difficulties facing local and international investors, reducing bureaucratic restrictions and enacting new laws to protect and encourage investments in order for Kuwait to become a financial and trade hub.
9. With the signing of the Sustainable Development Goals at the 2015 Summit, the State of Kuwait committed to incorporating the 17 SDGs into the pillars and programs of its national development plan.
10. There are no local governments in Kuwait. The Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Investment Authority are the main decision makers on Kuwait's local and international finances.
11. During the past three decades, the country's population had grown from 0.99 million in 1975 to 4.33 million in 2016. In June 2016, the proportion of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti citizens was 31% and 69%, respectively. 55% of the total Kuwaiti population is under the age of 24 and 4% is over 65. The country's current policy is set to reach a target of 40% Kuwaitis and 60% non-Kuwaiti by 2030, while aligning future local skills with the labor market needs.
12. Education is free for Kuwaitis; and health care is free for both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis. This policy will remain in effect in the new urban agenda.
13. Kuwaiti women by an Amiri Decree were granted their rights to vote in 2005 and female Members of Parliaments were elected in 2009.
14. **Kuwait's social security system** is distinguished. It ensures to provide assistance to citizens in case of aging, sickness or disability.
15. The disabled, those with special needs, minors and women are the most privileged of this system.

16. Kuwait was one of the first countries in the Middle East to commission a **Master Plan and a five-year development plan**, which was in 1952. Since then, the country has completed and modified several Master Plans during 1967 / 1970 / 1977 and 1983 to end up with Kuwait's third Master Plan of 1997, which was modified in 2005.
17. **The fourth Master Plan** is in the process of preparation and is expected to be completed by 2018.
18. Since Kuwait has a centralized planning and administration system, the goals of urban development policy and national development policy are inline. They are both aligned with the urban and national development goals vision of 2035.
19. With an average summer temperature of 48 centigrade, Kuwait is considered one of the hottest and dry climates in the world, which makes it difficult for agriculture, without using dry land and urban agricultural technology. Desalination plants meet the country's water needs. The first distillation plant was commissioned in 1951.
20. A national sewage network that covers 98% of facilities in the country handles sewage disposal.
21. Kuwait uses oil and gas to produce energy. In order to enhance the use of clean energy and reduce Carbon emissions, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research will be producing 75-100 mega-watts of electricity from renewable energy sources.
22. **The Ministry of Public Works** runs a program to improve efficiency of roads infrastructure and reduce traffic congestions; however, there is still a need to build Rapid Transit System to facilitate the redistribution of the population around other parts of the country.
23. There are no slums in Kuwait. All residents, both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, live in air-conditioned houses or apartments with access to safe drinking water, sanitation and electricity.

24. The Kuwaiti citizen, when married is eligible for a social free of interest loan, the eligible citizen may also file a request for a government home or land. Once the request is assigned to him, he may apply for a housing free of interest loan.
25. Kuwaiti female, has been granted equal eligibility in 2011.
26. Kuwaitis with special needs and persons with physical disability has the priority in the waiting list and get a better housing welfare package.
27. To ensure the country's sustainability and implement Kuwait's 2035 housing vision. The Ministry of Housing through its two entities **The Public Authority of Housing Welfare PAHW & Kuwait Credit Bank KCB** took the strategic initiatives in resolving the two major constraints, lack of affordability and lack of financing structures.
28. **PAHW** has set an ambitious target of allocating 12,000 units p.a (60,000 units over a five-year period), and by that, it has exceeded previous targets of 2014 and 2015, with the latest acceleration in land distribution and the execution of mega housing projects, PAHW has achieved to reduce the waiting time for the Kuwaiti applicant, from 17 years down to an average of 5 to 10 years.
29. **PAHW** has gone beyond housing developments to establishing entirely vibrant cities and communities outside the Metropolitan Area serving all stakeholders while alleviating the burden of financing the projects off the State's budget and instead allowing public-private partnerships to support and function on self-sustainability.
30. In sum, I would like to invite you to share our Vision of Kuwait 2035. A country transformed into a financial and commercial hub; a vibrant business center, where the private sector leads the economic activity; and where human development remains the country's most top priority.
31. The New Kuwait of 2035 will see an evolved way of looking at our assets, resources and our partnerships with the rest of the world, from a holistic and strategic perspective, that is citizens-centered, evidence-based and result-oriented; it is sustainable and change-driven and will continue throughout and

towards attaining the desired visions of our own leadership, our own people and our new generations of 2035.

Thank You