

Statement of
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authorities

Transcript of the English translation of the opening speech at Habitat III:

<http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/conferencessummits/habitat-iii-quito-17-20-october-2016/plenary-sessions/watch/mauricio-rodas-mayor-of-quito-habitat-iii-1st-plenary-meeting/5173803452001>

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our beautiful city, the first one to be selected as a world cultural heritage in 1978 by the UNESCO and located in the middle of the world, but, above all, a city with a big heart and one that always receives visitors with open arms.

For me, as mayor of Quito, on behalf of my city, it's an honor to welcome you to the city that was the first to be proclaimed a world cultural heritage city by UNESCO. We are in the middle of the world, as you know, and we are known for our great heart. And our people always receive visitors with open hearts and minds.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, pointed out that it is in the cities that we win or lose our fight for sustainable development and that is true. Today more than half of the world's population lives in cities and by 2030, it is estimated that two-thirds of all citizens of the world will live in cities. Without a doubt, this poses great challenges before us, because cities in some cases are synonyms of modernity and progress but some have become niches of great poverty and inequality. Dramatic human phenomena, such as, for example, the arrival of refugees shows the most fragile and vulnerable face in the cities. More than 70 percent of greenhouse gases emissions are generated by cities. It's one of the reasons why moving towards sustainable development, as the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has pointed out, largely depends on what happens in cities.

In this regard, local governments, as authorities closest to the community, to the citizens, play a key role in providing an impetus for progress towards equality in cities. We, local governments, live side by side with our citizens but also we are more involved than anybody in controlling social inclusion and justice. We have great knowledge of what is happening on the ground day to day. In this regard, it's fundamental empowering local governments with the best tools so that they might live up to their obligations and reach their objectives that are not the easy to reach so that all our society can move to sustainable development.

I want to emphasize the fact that the process proceeding Habitat III has involved great participation of lots of local governments and this shows the great openness of the United Nations, for which we are grateful. We have participated in defining, for example, the sustainable development goals, insisting that objective No.11 be included, which specifically focuses on cities, thus giving a local focus for one of the 17 goals of sustainable development. The New Urban Agenda, which will be approved here at Habitat III, is also based on many contributions made by local governments, which enrich the Quito declaration. These are very important aspects, if we want to move forward. We need to understand the vital importance of local authorities in working towards sustainable urban development.

If we understand that, we need to have a global venue, a roundtable discussion for these authorities to talk about urban issues in a very specific, very concrete way, within the institutional framework of United Nations, to ensure active participation by local governments in evaluating the results, the outcome and the follow-up, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Various tools include public policies, mechanism of financing, that will make it possible for the principles and ideals enshrined in New Urban Agenda, being translated into specific actions for the benefit of citizens. In this regard, thanks to the joint work of various networks of local and regional governments around the world under the umbrella of the global working group. Yesterday, the UN Secretary General

was handed over the document, on behalf of the world's local governments, where we make up a proposal to create such a global venue.

I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate the will of the local governments to work jointly with national governments and with the United Nation system to translate into concrete reality the principles of the New Urban Agenda, to promote policies that give our citizens an opportunity of economic growth with deep social justice and respect for environment and national resources.

Well, for all of us, the right to the city is made real. The right to live harmonious among citizens in public spaces that are safe, of high quality, indulge with high-level public services in respect of democracy, freedom and human rights. We reiterate this will to jointly work with the national governments and United Nations system but also we commit ourselves to provide specific spaces for this participation within the framework of international debate and implementation of urban policies, and access to international financing instruments. We reiterate this commitment. We will continue working with local governments, raising a united voice towards the ideal of resilience, safe, inclusive and sustainable cities. Thank you very much.