

**Statement by H.E. Chen Zhenggao, Special Representative
of the Chinese Government, at the United Nations
Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development**

(17 October 2016, Quito)

Your Excellency President Rafael Correa,

Honorable UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

Distinguished Heads of States and Governments,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please allow me to begin, on behalf of the government of the People's Republic of China, by extending warm congratulations to the convening of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations and the international community for their care and support to the development of urbanization and human settlements in China.

The second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which was convened in Istanbul in 1996, adopted the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration. Almost all of the solemn commitments jointly made at the Conference, as we can see, have been honored 20 years later. Today, urbanization is one of the most transformative trends in the 21st century, as more than half of the world's population lives in cities. At this critical juncture we gather here in Quito, where we will discuss and adopt the New Urban Agenda which is

attracting worldwide attention. The Agenda encapsulates the wisdom and consensus of all countries, and embodies the vision of innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development. It is here the blueprint for the development of future cities will be outlined, glorious visions of the people from all countries will be portrayed, and a new journey will begin.

Standing on this podium, I would like to review what has happened in China over the past 20 years since Habitat II was convened. Enormous changes have taken place in China as miracles have been created one after another and many dreams fulfilled.

China's urbanization rate increased from 30.5 percent in 1996 to 56.1 percent in 2015, with an annual growth rate of about 1.3 percentage points. China's GDP increased from RMB6.78 trillion yuan to RMB67.7 trillion yuan, and China's per capita GDP increased from RMB5,569 yuan to 49,351 yuan, up by nine times and eight times respectively. Urbanization has become an important engine driving China's economic growth.

In 2002, the Chinese government made it clear that China would "take the path of urbanization with Chinese characteristics." In 2007, it further proposed that "we will promote balanced development of large, medium-sized and small cities and towns on the principle of balancing urban and rural development, ensuring rational distribution, saving land, providing a full range of functions and getting larger cities to help smaller ones." In 2014, the Chinese government issued the National Plan for New-type Urbanization (2014-2020). In 2015, the Chinese government convoked the Central Urban Work Conference, which made an overall arrangement on the urban planning, construction and management. The Chinese government has issued a series of inclusive development policies

that are beneficial to both the registered urban residents and people migrating from rural areas, boosting the full coverage of basic public services, providing job opportunities for the people transferred from agriculture, and giving them on-the-job training to ensure a decent life for them.

In addition to providing its 1.3 billion people with food and clothing, China works hard to solve their housing problem. At present, the per capita floor area for urban residents is over 33 square meters, while the per capita floor area for rural residents is over 37 square meters. In particular, we have provided the aged, women and children and their family members who used to live in shanty areas with more than 26 million units of spacious and bright new apartments. We have also provided 17 million families with government-subsidized housing, mainly in the form of public-rental houses.

The human settlement environment in both urban and rural areas in China has improved considerably over the past 20 years. The urban sewage treatment rate has reached 91.9 percent, the rate of safe treatment of domestic garbage has reached 94.1 percent, 98.1 percent of urban residents have had access to running water, and 95.3 percent have had access to gas. Through efforts including implementing public transport priority development strategy, developing green buildings and “sponge cities”, strengthening capacity in disaster resistance and prevention and better protecting cultural heritage, China has ensured its urban and rural development move on in a more sustainable and resilient way.

China has engaged in not only the domestic development in the field of human settlements but also the international exchanges and cooperation and made contributions within the compass of her capability. In 2010, China successfully hosted Shanghai World Expo, the theme of

which, “Better City Better Life”, has been deeply rooted in people’s hearts. In 2013, China promoted the establishment of “World Cities Day” with related stakeholders, which drew more attention and participation from people all over the world on urban development. We jointly drafted 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with international communities and set a series of targets in the area of urban and human settlements development, keeping more closely up with the global progress of sustainable development. Moreover, China has made the contribution of 500,000 US Dollars to Habitat III Trust Fund to support and assist the delegates from other developing countries to participate in this important event.

We would like to share with all of you the following four pieces of experience which account for the great achievements scored in developing urbanization and improving human settlements environment in China:

First, steadfastly deepening reform and opening up China to the outside world has injected vitality constantly into the urban development; second, respecting and complying with the law of urban development, guiding the urban development with plans so as to advance the sustainable development of cities; third, promoting in an all-round way the new-type urbanization focusing on putting people first so as to enable all residents to have an increasing sense of gain; fourth, stepping up the efforts to develop rule of law, and gradually improving the supervision of urban planning with the promulgation of a series of laws such as Urban and Rural Planning Act, Land Administration Law, and Urban Property Management Law.

China is working hard to achieve the “two centenary goals” in the future. The goals are to complete the building of a moderately prosperous

society in all respects by 2020, doubling China ' s 2010 GDP and per capita income for both urban and rural residents and lifting all the 70 million plus rural poor out of poverty; and to build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the middle of the 21st century. In the next 20 years following the conclusion of Habitat III, China will have fulfilled its first centenary goal and will be approaching the realization of its second centenary goal. To realize the common vision of New Urban Agenda, I would like to make the following four propositions:

First, we need to create jointly a sound environment for development. More than ever, mankind today have the need and conditions to march towards the goal of achieving peace and development. All countries should adhere to the path of peaceful development, jointly build a new-type international relations with cooperation and win-win results as its core, and strive to create a peaceful, stable, and harmonious regional and international environment for the sustainable development of cities and human settlements.

Second, we need to respect the decisions made independently by each country. Countries differ from each other in national conditions and cultures. They vary greatly in populations, resources, environmental conditions and economic development. It is impossible to solve the problems in the development of cities and human settlements with a one-size-fits-all approach. We should respect the path of development selected independently by each country, respect the system selected and the development strategy, plan and relevant policies formulated by each country based on their own actual conditions, and try to align them effectively with the New Urban Agenda.

Third, we need to strengthen international cooperation and mutual help. As all countries are faced with the common challenges such as climate change, we should strengthen international cooperation and mutual help by taking the common interests of the whole humanity into consideration and in accordance with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities.” Developed countries should fulfill their obligations by providing funds and technologies for developing countries so as to help them enhance their capacity of sustainable development. Developing countries should help each other and constantly expand depth and width of South-South Cooperation.

Fourth, we need to improve global governance system. Efforts should be made to strengthen the coordination between governments of all countries, the United Nations system, all international organizations, enterprises, non-governmental organizations, women and youth organizations and other stakeholders, and to mobilize the participation of all sectors of the society. Efforts should be made to bring the role of the United Nations and its Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in overall planning and coordination into full play, intensify the implementation at the international level, and attach importance to the concerns of developing countries, so as to promote the common and shared development of all the countries in the world.

Meanwhile, China would also like to make the following commitments:

First, we will take an active part in the process of promoting sustainable urbanization, promote effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda in China, and continue to improve the quality of human settlement environment in China.

Second, we will deepen the reform of the planning system and enable planning play a better role in guiding the sustainable urbanization so as to realize orderly construction, appropriate development and efficient operation of cities, and work hard to build harmonious, livable, vibrant cities with distinctive characteristics to enable people to enjoy a better life.

Third, we will continue to strengthen the international cooperation in the field of human settlements, support the efforts made by UN-Habitat and other UN agencies in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and implementing the New Urban Agenda, and intensify friendly cooperation with the countries along the “One Belt, One Road” in the areas of urban planning, infrastructure, industrial cooperation and capacity building.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The World Cities Day is drawing near. It is our hope that more and more countries and regions in the world will hold the activities related to World Cities Day to facilitate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. On the World Cities Day, we should not only enjoy the happiness brought about by cities, but also think about the future of cities, solve their problems, and make them better places for tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me quote a line from an ancient Chinese poem, which reads “Voice from high above can be heard far and wide naturally.” Today, in this plateau city at an altitude of 2,852 meters, let ’ s make the voice of this conference heard worldwide, and make the New Urban Agenda known as a common global commitment that will be put into action in all countries and regions in the world.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that all the countries can gather again 20 years later to enjoy the happiness of reaping the harvest grown from the seeds we sow today!

Finally, I wish the conference a complete success!

Thank you!