



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION
AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

Statement

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at

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HABITAT III

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Mr. President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr Joan Clos, Secretary –General of the UN Conference Habitat III
Your Excellencies, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am proud to have been given the opportunity to greet this conference on behalf of the Republic of Croatia. My delegation would like to extend its sincere congratulations to you, Mr Chairman, and to the other distinguished elected delegates.

Please allow me to express the appreciation of the Republic of Croatia to the host of the Habitat III Conference, the Republic of Ecuador, and the city of Quito, for their hospitality.

I also wish to thank all those actively involved in the preparation of the New Urban Agenda for their exceptional efforts and cooperation, as well as the consistent steering of this procedure in order to achieve agreement on the principles, commitments, obligations and activities that are to result from the Agenda.

The positions of the Republic of Croatia with regard to the New Urban Agenda are presented in the joint statement of the European Union and its Member States.

The adoption of the New Urban Agenda is the first step towards achieving a common vision of sustainable cities, and towards improving the methods of their planning and management that are directed towards social inclusion and reduction of urban poverty, environmental sustainability and resilient urban development.

Equally important is the fact that its adoption also means assuming the political commitment for its implementation.

Just as they were adopting the New Urban Agenda, EU Member States, including the Republic of Croatia, have started working intensely on the Urban Agenda for the European Union. The realization of the goals of the Urban Agenda for the European Union shall also strongly contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the New Urban Agenda.

I would also like to mention that Croatia is a rather urbanized country, however without facing the trend of rapid urbanization that is present at the global level. Nevertheless, extremely complex challenges that urban areas generally have to deal with have been observed in my country as well. Therefore, accelerated urbanization and demographic, economic and social changes lend an ever increasing significance to the urban policy in Croatia.

It is almost two decades ago that the Republic of Croatia, in its national strategic and planning documents, committed to:

- a polycentric development concept,
- fostering the development of medium-sized and small towns, and
- slowing down population growth in major cities.

This concept, however, has not been fully realised. Processes of depopulation, abandonment of rural areas and islands, consequences of war destruction and economy restructuring did not support polycentric development.

In addition, over the past 15 years, the demographic picture of the Republic of Croatia has been characterised by:

- a fall in the total population,

- continuous natural depopulation,
- pronounced aging of population,
- and consequently, an imbalance in the population age structure.

Today, more than a half of the population of the Republic of Croatia lives in urban areas. The process of urbanization mostly unfolds in the direction of population concentration in several urban regions, along with the depopulation of island, mountain and rural areas. Most affected by depopulation and the loss of functions and public facilities are small and medium-sized towns, with a particularly pronounced need for supporting their development at the national level.

In view of the stagnation in the population number and the population aging processes, Croatia plans to pay particular attention in urban planning to the development of cities for all generations, taking into consideration the needs of families, children, elderly citizens and all vulnerable groups. In this context, one of the key development topics in the Republic of Croatia consists in addressing the needs of youth, especially in terms of ensuring the realization of their right to work, in order to mitigate the drain of the young population and to achieve the country's demographic recovery.

For this Conference, the Republic of Croatia has prepared its National Input. During the period when the National Input was being developed an implementation assessment for the 1996 Istanbul Habitat Agenda was carried out, along with consideration of the challenges for future sustainable urban development.

Since urban areas and cities are starting points and generators of development, while at the same time also the greatest consumers of goods with the highest level of ecological conflicts, the Republic of Croatia welcomes the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. Nevertheless, I am confident that the Agenda we are going to adopt at the end of the Conference, as a common vision of sustainable cities, will be of assistance in responding to new challenges and provide new impetus to achieving urban equity, well-being and prosperity.

I would particularly like to reflect on the importance of high-quality organization and of monitoring the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which is equally demanding as the process of its development.

Policy-making at the national, regional and local level, as a precondition for the development of sustainable urban development strategies and plans, should enable the realization of concrete projects and the addressing of identified development challenges.

It is of the utmost importance to find an optimal way for involving an as wide a range of stakeholders as possible: from national, regional and local authorities, experts, the educational system, the business sector, to the citizens themselves, in the implementation of this document and to assist them, through a carefully considered communication strategy, in considering their own role in the realization of inclusive, safe, resilient, sustainable and smart cities of the future.

Let me reiterate that the commitments of all of us here at the Habitat III conference and adoption of the New Urban Agenda addressing the complex challenges of urbanization, offer an important step towards the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 11 and a number of other interrelated goals.

To conclude, I do hope that through realisation of the goals from the New Urban Agenda we shall contribute to the resolution of the identified challenges and that we shall create preconditions for a better life of the generations to come.

Thank you, Mister Chairman (president)