

**Habitat III – United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
on 17-20th October, 2016 at Quito, Ecuador**

Statement by

**Dr. N Chatterjee,
Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation,
Republic of India
&
Leader of the Delegation to Habitat-III**

Excellencies, Hon'ble head of delegations, Members of delegations, distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Republic of Ecuador and this beautiful and historic City of Quito for hosting the Habitat III - United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and for the wonderful hospitality being extended to us since our arrival. I congratulate UN-HABITAT for organising this mega event.

This event is indeed important, for, we are meeting here after more than half of the world has turned `urban`, to set the tone for how the settlements should evolve in the current century and promote prosperity of humanity. We have gathered here to firm up the new urban agenda, subsequent to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals a year ago, so that our actions are in line and in tune with the anticipated goals, targets and commitments. India stands here to share the vision of Republic of India with regard to the evolving new urban agenda.

Importance of urbanisation in India :

*India is one **among the largest urban systems** in the world, with about 377 million people residing in urban areas, comprising about 31.16% of the total population. The transition from rural to urban has been gradual, on account of rural to urban migration as well as natural growth. With 7933 towns (of which a part being census towns with urban characteristics but with rural structures for governance) the urban growth is expected to increase rapidly. It is estimated that the Indian urban population would reach a level of about 40% or 583 million by 2030, adding in the process around 163*

million people in its urban areas during the period 2015 to 2030. Urban centres have acted as a pillar of Indian economic growth; urbanization has brought in significant contribution to the Indian economy with over 60 per cent of India's gross domestic product coming from the cities and towns. The successive National Five Year Plans have continued with the emphasis on promoting the symbiotic relationship between urban and rural settlements and also in making cities much more liveable, inclusive and competitive. The current 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) too re-emphasises that urbanisation will be central to India's strategy of achieving faster and more inclusive growth because agglomeration and densification of economic activities and urban agglomeration stimulates economic efficiencies.

An understanding of the contemporary and emerging challenges and opportunities of urbanisation in India, highlight the following:

- Urbanisation is an important emerging reality in India
- Growth in the numbers and population of metropolitan cities and census towns represent the most recent trend in India's urbanization
- India's urbanization is poised to accelerate in the coming decades
- Urbanisation has made significant contributions to India's economic growth and poverty reduction
- Managing and facilitating the process of urbanization is essential for India's structural transformation
- The growth of cities is to be so managed so as to address prevention of growth of informal settlements within cities and unplanned urban sprawl around the periphery.
- Aligning urban land markets to the forces of India's urbanization.
- Strengthening public transport forms the core of the National Urban Transport Policy
- Urban air and water pollution and emission levels call for focused attention.
- Housing is a key sector with significant economic and social impacts for the Indian economy
- There is an urgent need to address Infrastructure deficits across cities and towns so as to ensure urban quality of life and local economic development

- Governance holds the key to well managed cities and towns and urban development is a shared responsibility of the different tiers of government and of the public and private sectors
- Financing urban development is a challenge that most countries encounter in managing urbanization, and
- Addressing the challenges of urbanization and tapping urban opportunities lies at the core of the recent urban sector initiatives

India's efforts in promoting sustainable urban development :

India has been consistently making efforts towards deepening and in enhancing the role of urbanisation in the developmental process with wide ranging initiatives. **Urban governance** has been identified as a critical area for comprehensive development of cities and towns. A **strengthened Municipal System** envisioned through the 74th Constitution Amendment Act which provides appropriate and adequate powers, functions and financial autonomy including planning mechanisms, has helped in making the cities self governing entities, with community participation and accountability; public disclosure has guided their governance. Measures that advocate earmarking a specified percentage of **municipal budget for the urban poor**, ensuring tenurial security for the urban poor and incorporating urban poor in city fabric through earmarking land for urban poor in the city planning process are some major initiatives that has helped in promoting the **cities as inclusive entities**. Initiatives to **eliminate the structural and systemic constraints to the functioning of the city economies**, through reform linked fast track development programmes on mission mode, have made significant strides in enabling cities to conceive themselves and to evolve as sustainable, inclusive and economically vibrant cities. **Reform measures** in the form of promoting e-governance, ensuring community participation and accountability through public disclosure are important components adopted towards restructuring governance for improving quality of urbanisation. Thus, the reform focus of the current initiatives primarily addresses the issues of improving governance, enabling financial empowerment of the municipal system, ensuring optimality in land use, land utilisation and in promoting inclusive urban development and initiatives for capacity building at all levels.

Inclusiveness is the cornerstone of all development initiatives in the housing and urban development sector in India. Adequate and affordable shelter is a priority area and towards facilitating the same, India has embarked on a major mission of

'Housing for All' which envisages provision of 20 million houses by 2022, through a set of policy and action interventions in urban areas. Appropriately integrated with financial, technology and governance components, along with people centric emphasis, this special intervention is a reflection of reaffirmation of India's commitment for ensuring affordable housing for all with a component of improved quality of life. Thus **India's approach** to adequate housing for all is **reflective of inclusivity, access to land, finance, technology** and focused orientation towards the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. A **Technology Sub-Mission** under (Housing for All- Urban) has been launched to facilitate use of sustainable construction technologies and adoption of improved layout designs and building plans suitable for various geo-climatic zones. A **legislative initiative** has also been put in place towards ensuring transparency and accountability in **real estate sector** to protect the interest of the customers even while ensuring larger delivery of affordable housing. Efforts to revise the already available **Urban Housing and Habitat Policy** at the National level, evolving a **model rental housing policy** towards improving the availability of houses for new entrants in cities and the **formulation of model building bye-laws** to promote orderly growth are some of the initiatives that would enable cities to grow as inclusive, competitive and sustainable entities.

India has launched major **initiatives for urban sector** that would channelize growth leading to improved governance, quality infrastructure and accessibility thereby resulting in improved life of its citizens at large. These initiatives are aimed towards strengthening the urban system to enable it to play a more positive and significant role in national economic development and in improving access to services to all the population. The **Smart Cities Mission** envisages development of 100 smart cities to enhance the quality of urban life and to provide a clean and suitable environment. The Mission for **Rejuvenation and Transformation** of 500 cities of above 100,000 population aims to create infrastructure that has a direct link to provision of better services to the people. The **Heritage City development and Augmentation** programme intends to support core infrastructure aimed at revitalization of heritage sites and nearby areas. The **National Urban Livelihood mission** envisages citizens to be adequately skilled to gain beneficial livelihoods and also to contribute to the economy. Such specific urban development related Missions are further supported by special programmes such as **Make-in-India, Digital India, Skilling India and Start up India** which all together aim to reinvigorate and re-energise the cities as engines of economic growth and empowerment and as centres of improved quality of life. In addition, there is a need to develop a symbiotic and ecologically sustainable

rural urban continuum. Towards ensuring integrated development and also to promote and strengthen the complementarity between the rural and urban settlements, the **National Rurban** mission envisages development of such areas in the urban-rural continuum mode. This Mission is aimed at making the villages smart by creating Rurban clusters through the application of Urban Planning concepts for development of infrastructure and basic services.

The convergence of aforesaid missions not only promotes integrated planning across various programs and schemes but also strives for achievement of incremental and qualitative improvements in the living conditions.

The New Urban Agenda – focus areas and strategies for India :-

India explicitly recognizes the role and importance of urbanization and cities in the process of its socio-economic transformation, and therefore affirms its commitment to the larger goals of urban equity and eradication of poverty; inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; productivity, competitiveness, diversification, innovation; urban resilience. India also reaffirms its commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

In the context of present and emerging pattern of urbanisation as well as its current and expected role and contribution in economic development, an agenda has been evolved that would enable the transformation of India in its economic as well as social tenets. The basic components of the agenda would include,

Firstly, economic growth and productivity, through fully planned and sustainable human settlements, with focus on improved mobility, well distributed employment avenues, intense use of technology and innovations, managed through e-governance and connected through a smart grid, facilitated by self regulated norms;

Secondly, improving quality of life covering sanitation and providing public facilities with easy access;

Thirdly, inclusive development, through promoting composite living representing socio-economic population, with adequate and affordable housing for the urban poor and senior citizens;

Fourthly, sustainability and issues of climate change focussing on improved public transport, eco-friendly transport modes including for local travels, facilitating barrier-free pedestrian movement, rainwater harvesting along streets and buildings, drainage systems, solid and liquid waste management including treatment and reuse, waste reduction options, efficient energy use including reduction in usage, longer life integrated road systems, and disaster preparedness;

Fifthly, urban safety, with safe buildings and streets promoting crime-free society and access to social justice and gender equity; and

Sixthly, urban greens and open spaces, which would be green plantations and barrier-free buildings.

India's new urban agenda relies on few levers to make cities work towards greater productivity, inclusion, sustainability, and rural-urban linkages, which include:

- Putting in place an integrated urban policy consistent with the principle of co-operative federalism that would be driven by consideration of efficiency, inclusion and sustainability, and which would work towards universality of the urban agenda across different tiers of the government.
- Initiatives to Harmonize agglomeration economies through elimination of barriers to the flow of factors of production, namely, capital, land and labour; promotion of compact and cluster urban development within a regional and rural-urban framework; boosting economic density and providing support to initiatives that favour synergies and innovations; and creating skilled human resources.
- Promoting complementarity of rural-urban continuum by harnessing their mutual strengths and advantages for integrated development
- Promoting inclusive urban development with a mix of strategies that would consist of universalization of basic services including education and health; governing cities on principles of social cohesion and civic engagement; access to housing as a tool for alleviating poverty and as a growth escalator; putting in place a strategy for reducing "working poverty".
- Recognizing and actively promoting the centrality of sustainability in urban policy following a country-wide approach to urban development, addressing issues of emission levels, atmospheric pollution, pollution of water and soil,

and degradation of urban spaces. The new urban agenda focuses on cutting down of waste, savings in energy consumption particularly in buildings and protection of green spaces. These are not merely technical problems and are proposed to be addressed with education, citizens' participation, and campaigns for environmental protection.

- Empowering municipalities and other local level institutions to manage and maintain infrastructure services, implement the right process to increase productivity and deal with exclusion and build capabilities in public services.
- Strengthen housing finance systems, so as to enable and to improve access to affordable finance to all, in clear recognition and understanding of the role of housing as an instrument of household level well being and as an economy booster
- Enhance access to social justice and gender equity, so that no section of society is left untouched in the economic development process, and
- Development of a robust urban information system, so that decisions are based on well informed and promote transparency and accountability and also focus on desired target groups.

We are happy to note that the new urban agenda duly takes into account the context of varying patterns of urbanisation in different countries and its economic and social impacts, and the different political and socio-economic factors as well as the applicable laws of the land in different countries rather than as a 'one size fits all' package of binding commitments. In the spirit of SDGs, the new urban agenda is broader in nature, duly permitting variations for national circumstances, and tries to catalyze and incentivize better urban policy through sharing of development experiences.

With regard to 'right to adequate housing for all', it is noted that this issue is multi-dimensional in nature and has implications that would vary depending on the context, and thus may be limited to reflecting upon the global community's commitment in ensuring affordable housing for all along with improved quality of life, with a variety of housing options that are affordable and accessible for members of different income groups of society. Further, in respect of 'Planning and Management of Urban Spatial Development', while emphasising the association that human settlements form and that systems have with the food security system at large, the emphasis could be

confined to form and structure of human settlements. While integration of food and nutrition needs of urban residents' are indeed important areas, the related policies and activities would be too broad encompassing the entire developmental spectrum; hence, limiting the issues to areas of active concern of the new urban agenda in line with habitat issues per se could be a preferred option.

The new urban agenda, however, is accommodative and gives due recognition for variations in national circumstances as provided in the 'Call for Action' outlining the spirit by specifying 'We will work to implement this New Urban Agenda within our own countries and at the regional and global levels, taking into account different national realities, capacities, and levels of development, and respecting national legislations and practices, as well as policies and priorities'. Moving forward, we would align our efforts, within the context of our National political and legislative frameworks, policies, and country context and circumstances, in line with the new urban agenda, for promoting sustainable housing and urban development in the next two decades.

India explicitly recognizes the role and importance of urbanization and cities in the process of its socio-economic transformation, and affirms its commitment to the larger goals of urban equity and eradication of poverty; inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; productivity, competitiveness, diversification and innovation; and urban resilience.

We once again thank the Republic of Ecuador, the City of Quito and the UN-HABITAT for this opportunity to share the emerging vision of India for a new urban agenda, and would to assure India's commitment for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Thank you.
