



STATEMENT DELIVERED BY PROF. JUDI WAKHUNGU, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, DURING THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HABITAT III) HELD ON 17TH OCTOBER 2016, IN QUITO, ECUADOR

**H.E Mr. Rafael Correa, President of the Republic of Ecuador,
H.E Mr. Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations,
Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of the UN- Habitat and Secretary General of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to participate in this United Nations Summit convened to reinvigorate the global political commitment towards sustainable development of cities and other human settlements. The Summit is particularly crucial as it will set a new global strategy for sustainable urbanization for the next two decades.

At the outset, let me express our heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Ecuador, through you Mr. President, for the hospitality and excellent generosity extended to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Quito.

At the same, I congratulate the Secretariat and the Bureau for the excellent organization of this Summit. On behalf of my delegation, I welcome with appreciation the election of Kenya as one of the Vice-Presidents. I assure you, Mr. President, of Kenya's full support towards the success of the Summit.



Ladies and Gentlemen;

Cities have been part of human civilization since time immemorial. They serve as places where people work and live. They also function as transport corridors, hubs of commerce and industry, real estate, innovation and administration.

In many countries, they generate substantial percentage of the GDP. Essentially, they are engines of economic growth and wealth creation. However, without proper planning and good governance, their sustainability and robustness can be undermined.

Indeed, most ancient civilizations thrived in cities. However, due to lack of proper planning, they were not able to effectively respond to the economic and social needs as well as to the environmental challenges of the time.

In order to mitigate the above, the international community converged 40 years ago in Vancouver in Habitat I where it was acknowledged that "unacceptable human settlements circumstances are likely to be aggravated by inequitable economic growth and uncontrolled urbanization, unless positive and concrete action is taken at the national and international levels".

The Conference adopted "bold, meaningful and effective human settlement policies and spatial planning strategies that considered human settlements as instruments and objects of development".

20 years later, we met in Istanbul to build on the gains made and agreed to pursue the twin goals of "adequate shelter for all, and sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world".

I believe that vision is even more relevant now than ever before, because, contemporary cities are evidently different from those of



40 years ago. The challenges we are facing today in our urban and rural areas have increased both in scope and complexity.

For example, the relatively smaller city populations of yesteryears have now increased manifold putting additional pressure on provision of infrastructure and basic services. Environmental challenges including climate change are also escalating in unprecedented scale with negative socio-economic implications.

Amidst these challenges, however, there is hope! Solutions are now within reach with enhanced research, science, knowledge and information. Technological innovations are turning challenges into immense opportunities for economic growth, employment creation, and environmental sustainability.

The New Urban Agenda, which Kenya is proud to join the world in adopting, offers another framework for scaling up efforts at all levels in developing sustainable human settlements. I am happy to note it proposes various approaches and policy options for planning, developing and managing robust and livable cities and other human settlements.

This agenda also finds its relevance in the localization and implementation of the SDGs. All aspects of human development as espoused in the SDGs especially poverty eradication, sustained economic growth as well as combating climate change will be realized in cities and rural areas.

Mr. President,

Africa is the second most populous continent with a population of about 1.2 billion. By 2050, this is expected to rise to about 2 billion. Currently, a significant proportion of this population lives in rural areas. Nevertheless, the trend is progressively changing since the continent is the fastest urbanizing region of the world.



The trend presents immense opportunities for collaboration and partnerships in developing smart cities across Africa – cities that are economically viable, socially livable, environmentally resilient, and politically stable. However, this requires the right policies and action-oriented frameworks at all levels.

In Kenya, 37 per cent of our people work and live in cities and towns. This is expected to rise to 70 per cent by 2030. Kenya’s constitution assigns roles to the national as well as devolved governments in 47 counties with a view to improving service delivery at all levels. We are determined to establish the necessary frameworks to ensure this structure increasingly creating globally competitive cities for investments. We welcome enhanced collaboration and partnerships in this regard.

Mr. President,

Without doubt, effective means of implementation will be required for the New Urban Agenda to further unlock the full potential of cities and other human settlements. To augment efforts by Governments, the international community should galvanize financial resources both from public and private sources for enhanced capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer.

Moreover, the success of the New Urban Agenda will only be realized through a strong follow up and review mechanism at all levels. At the global level, I note that the UN-Habitat, which is the lead UN agency responsible for promoting sustainable urbanization, has been assigned additional mandate in the implementation, follow up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

Given the universal nature of the New Urban agenda, the UN-Habitat needs to be reinforced to effectively carry out the mandate. In that regard, we welcome the call for its assessment to determine the areas that need further improvements in the



agency. As host to the organization, Kenya remains committed to supporting it in the fulfillment of its mandate to Member States.

In conclusion, Mr. President, Kenya reiterates its supports to the New Urban Agenda and urges for its full and effective implementation. Indeed, the destiny of mankind, the planet and its life support system, largely depends on the way we manage our cities and rural areas.

We are confident this Agenda is a step in the right direction. Furthermore, it will contribute towards “making cities and other human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” as envisioned in SDG 11.

We know that the futures of cities are shaped by past and present decisions. I am optimistic that the New Urban Agenda will enable us transit from the past into a sustainable future for our cities and human settlements.

I thank you.