

03:21 PM – 03:27 PM  
Wednesday, 17 September 2014

## STATEMENT BY THE **EUROPEAN UNION**

---



**Statement of the European Union and its Member States**

***1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) - 17-18 September 2014***

***Agenda item 6: implementation of the outcomes of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and identification of new and emerging challenges on sustainable urban development,***

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Co-Chairs, Under Secretary General, Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies,

Allow us to start by congratulating the members of the newly elected bureau and in particular the two co-chairs, as well as the Secretary General of the Conference. Under your leadership, Under Secretary General, and that of the bureau, we are looking forward to fruitful discussions in the lead up to the Habitat III conference.

Before getting in the substance of this agenda item, let us say a few words on **our expectations from this preparatory process towards the Habitat III conference.**

The 3rd United Nations Conference on Sustainable Urban Development offers a unique opportunity to develop an universal perspective on human settlements and sustainable urban development. It should result in renewed political commitment and shared vision on sustainable urban development. It should anchor the issues of human settlement and urbanisation within the sustainable development agenda and increase even more global awareness of the extent and the seriousness of the challenges facing our urban environment.

As the first UN conference organized after the post 2015 development agenda is determined in September 2015, Habitat III should build on the framework and content provided by the Post-2015 process, and at the same time, sustainable urban development should be given due consideration in the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda.

Also, while elaborating the new urban agenda through this process, we should make sure that the action oriented policies discussed are realistic and implementable, by governments and by all the Habitat agenda partners, first of all local authorities.

Let me ensure that in spite of the challenging scheduling chosen for this prepcom and some procedural concerns about it, and even if the Secretariat is not fully formed, you can count on the

EU and its MS to support you in this challenging task and make the most of those 2 days, while reiterating that we are looking forward to a preparatory process organized in the most inclusive effective efficient and improved manner.

Co-chairs,

18 years after the adoption of the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, the EU and its MS welcome this opportunity to **discuss the progress of the implementation of Habitat II as well as the new challenges**, and we thank the Secretary General for its report in this regard.

We believe that the Habitat Agenda remains a solid political document to build on as we acknowledge that the concerns and the recommendations carried by the Istanbul Declaration are ever realities and this document should remain a basis for our reflections on cities, urbanisation and habitat. Now, it is our common responsibility, together with the Habitat agenda partners, to ensure that the lessons learned from implantation of Habitat II and the new emerging challenges will be reflected in the New Urban Agenda.

We see significant progress which has been made towards attaining the goals of the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration on Cities and other Settlements. However, the EU MS are deeply concerned that all the progress made so far has not been enough to prevent the incremental increase of slums and to ensure the sustainable development of urban areas globally:

- Rapid urbanization, especially in emerging economies and developing countries calls for major changes in the way in which urban development is designed and managed, as well as substantial increases of public and private investments in urban infrastructure and basic services. Rapid urbanisation also has the potential to bring wealth and welfare to large populations but also risks to increase inequalities and use resources unsustainably.
- We also need to increase urban resilience to disasters and climate change, as well as to tackle better the challenges of air pollution in urban centers.
- Population dynamics, and their different trends in developing and developed countries, as well as the interconnections between urban and rural areas have also a critical influence on urban development and should be taken into account appropriately.
- Actions are needed to improve service delivery to the increasing number of slum dwellers living in deprived housing conditions with lack of access to basic services like water, sanitation, waste management, durable housing and sufficient living area.
- We also need to pay increased attention to the interrelationship between migration and development since migration and mobility pose both challenges and opportunities for cities as centres of growth

- To ensure sustainable, inclusive and green growth, action is also needed in cities to create jobs, in particular green jobs, with sectors such as recycling of waste providing promising opportunities,
- We also need to collectively better manage and improve personal security and safety in cities, in particular for women and girls, and the most vulnerable.

In order to address these challenges, we have to encompass a more comprehensive approach towards sustainable urbanization and the development of cities. As an underlying principle the EU and its MS support a holistic and integrated approach to urbanisation in order to achieve an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable society.

Co-chairs,

**The commitment of the EU and its Member States towards the implementation of the Habitat II** outcomes cannot be fully and comprehensively described in this statement. As a major donor worldwide, we have, together, largely contributed to support developing countries' efforts to implement Habitat II, from huge investments in water and sanitation to the provision of basic urban services. Internally, we have adopted a number of legislative instruments at all levels, and we are currently undertaking work to further develop our policies in the field of urban sustainable development.

Co-chairs,

Implementing Habitat II and working towards the elaboration of Habitat III cannot be done by national governments alone. We need to underline the importance of the responsibilities incumbent on **all Habitat agenda partners, in particular local authorities and civil society organizations.**

The European Union and its Member States have high expectations of the role to be played by the Local authorities. They are the closest partners to citizens, historically linked with the fulfilment of their basic needs. An increasing co-operation, based on agreed principles, between all levels of government, is therefore required to work effectively on urban development. We are eagerly looking forward to the Secretariat's proposal as regards their involvement in the preparatory process for Habitat III that has already started, as mandated by the General Assembly in the fall of 2012.

More generally, the Habitat Agenda cannot be fully implemented without an inclusive co-operation with Civil Society Organisations, including the vibrant network of NGOs involved in many aspects of urban development at all levels, as well as with the private sector. Together, we should form a global partnership for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The relevant Civil Society organizations should be fully involved in this preparatory process and in the Conference, as well as for the implementation of the new urban agenda.

I thank you