

Wednesday, 17 September 2014

STATEMENT BY **FINLAND**

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The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

PrepCom 1, New York 17-18 September 2014

Agenda Item 6.

Progress to date in the 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.

Statement by Finland

Thank you,

Let me start by extending our congratulations to the co-chairs and the newly elected bureau. I would also like to state Finland's full alignment with the statement of the EU and its Member States.

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is to address one of the crucial questions of our time. How to make our cities liveable for all? As cities grow at an increasingly rapid pace, we cannot afford to continue business as usual. How can we develop a city where people want to live, instead of a city where people have to live? A city in which every segment of society can flourish - a place where all citizens can afford to, and want to, spend their time for both work and leisure.

The future of world's cities is fundamentally intertwined with the challenges of sustainable development at large. Therefore it is crucial to make sure that Sustainable cities and human settlements are given due consideration in the preparation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the Post-2015 era. In the Habitat III Conference we will be committing ourselves to a new urban agenda. This agenda should play an important role in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs.

With regard to the challenges we are facing, Finland would like to highlight some key ingredients for contributing to sustainable urban development. In our view, urgent action is

needed in particular in promoting integrated planning, improving sustainable mobility, increasing resource efficiency and balancing the rural-urban nexus.

Integrated planning is a useful tool in decreasing the ecological footprint in urban development. It draws together plans from key sectors at regional and national levels. It can decrease urban sprawl and increase resource and energy efficiency in housing, land use planning and transport.

In Finland we have taken promising steps in integrated planning. A few weeks ago, fourteen municipalities around The Helsinki Metropolitan Area agreed on setting up a metropolitan governance system to solve problems related to land use, housing and transportation. We have also formulated Agreements of Intent between the government and other major cities, in which city regions promise to increase the density of the city structure and construct more public housing in cooperation with neighboring municipalities. It is important to develop both rural and urban areas, and ensure that people living outside densely built areas can participate in the development of a municipality.

Mobility for all is a central feature of an inclusive and sustainable city. This has been a key area in our country when drawing up the integrated plans. We need to increase sustainability in transport, which means freeing ourselves from the dominance of the private car and shifting into a transportation system which is based on public and non-motorised transport. Special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations is a key component in this regard.

Mr Chairman, due to the rapid urbanization of our time, it is not surprising that we are facing numerous and complex challenges in urban development. In addressing these challenges, we have to join our efforts and to engage all decision making levels as well as actors from the wide spectrum of the civil society.

The Habitat III Conference should become a milestone in the history of sustainable urban development and provide a global vision and concrete steps in making the cities more liveable for all.

Thank you