



Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Urbanization can be a powerful force. It is a phenomenon that has the potential to contribute positively to the lives of the majority of the world's population. Yet, in many places, developed and developing countries alike, urbanization is associated with the creation of more slums, more people living in inadequate housing conditions, a lack of secure tenure for housing and land; greater disparities, inequalities and discrimination.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises to leave no-one behind. It envisages "a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination" and reaffirms the responsibilities of all States to "respect, protect and promote human rights, without discrimination or distinction of any kind". The New Urban Agenda includes the same commitments.

Yet, twenty years ago, the outcome document of Habitat II (the Habitat Agenda) already promised to change the way human settlements are planned and developed.

And yet, these commitments were largely unmet. Today, we must ask why.

One of the main reasons is that housing, education, health, water, sanitation, and access to justice have been treated as commodities and not as human rights. This vision does not allow for the "paradigm shift" that is needed - as stated in the New Urban Agenda - and for the fundamental change required in the way urbanization is developed.

Urbanization processes need to be informed by human rights—the human rights of all inhabitants, without discrimination, which must be respected and protected throughout all urban processes.

That is why the New Urban Agenda will only be fulfilled:

- if human rights are fully integrated in laws, policies and programmes
- if responsibilities are clearly established between the various spheres of state authority
- if transparent, participatory and accountable human rights measurement systems are put in place to assess the effectiveness of urban policies, programmes, budgets and processes in meeting their objectives to realize the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. Such systems should include an analysis of the prioritization and use of the maximum available resources for these purposes, clear time frames, indicators and benchmarks to inform decision-making processes and to allow for adjustments when necessary, and
- if accountability is recognized as key to implementation.

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Without human rights, there can be no sustainable cities.

It is essential to recognize that cities are not just bricks and mortar. Without people, there are no cities. And people have rights.

Today, when the curtain falls on Habitat III, each and every one of us should begin the work of implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and other international commitments, and for the realization of human rights of all inhabitants.

Homelessness, landlessness, rising inequalities, criminalization of poverty, lack of affordability, discrimination, spatial segregation, gentrification, privatization of public spaces, violence, suppression of freedom of speech, lack of grievance and redress mechanisms, lack of consultation and participation in decision-making processes: these are some of the many human rights abuses city-dwellers in developed and developing countries alike face on a daily basis.

We are all accountable for changing the course of urbanization. Member states and local authorities are accountable to bring to life the promises of the New Urban Agenda. But we are all accountable to the people, to the inhabitants of all human settlements.

Let each and every one of us leave Quito with these objectives: to bring human rights home and to make cities places of equal opportunity for all, without discrimination, where people can live in security, peace and dignity.

I thank you.