



Habitat III

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

Opening Statement

By

**Dr. Joan Clos, Secretary-General of
Habitat III**

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- Excelentísimo Secretario General de Naciones Unidas, Sr. Ban Ki Moon,
- Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente de Ecuador, Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado,
- Excelentísimos Sres. Jefes de Estado, de gobierno y delegaciones nacionales,
- Sra Ministra de Vivienda y Desarrollo Sostenible de Ecuador, y copresidenta del Comité Preparatorio, de Habitat III,
- Sr. Alcalde de la Ciudad de Quito, Mauricio Esteban Rodas Espinel,
- Ilustres Alcaldes y representantes de gobiernos locales y regionales,
- Distinguidos co-presidentes y miembros del Comité Preparatorio,
- Sres. Co-facilitadores de la Nueva Agenda Urbana, Sra. Lourdes Ortiz Yparraguirre y Sr. Dámaso Luna Corona,
- Representantes de la Asamblea General de Socios,
- Queridas amigas y amigos,

Quisiera dar mis más sinceros agradecimientos al pueblo ecuatoriano, y en especial al Sr. Presidente de Ecuador, Rafael Correa, y al Sr. Alcalde de la ciudad de Quito, Mauricio Rodas, por su generosa hospitalidad y caluroso recibimiento en Quito.

Muchísimas gracias por sus grandes esfuerzos en acoger a más de 40.000 personas que han venido de todo el mundo para estar con nosotros hoy en la casa de la Cultura.

Señores Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno,

Muchísimas gracias por acompañarnos en un día tan importante.

Estamos orgullosos de ser testigo de la culminación del proceso de preparación de la Nueva Agenda Urbana, después de tres años de debates y discusiones muy productivas con todos ustedes.

Juntos, hemos logrado desarrollar una nueva estrategia para la sostenibilidad de nuestros pueblos, ciudades y de nuestro planeta.

La Nueva Agenda Urbana abre las puertas a una nueva etapa de prosperidad y esperanza urbana para el futuro.

Nuestras ciudades se han convertido hoy en el principal motor de desarrollo y prosperidad y también de empleos de alto valor añadido.

Sin embargo, nuestro análisis de la urbanización en los últimos veinte años, revela que las prácticas urbanas actuales son insostenibles.

La Nueva Agenda Urbana es un conjunto de estrategias que apuntan a reducir y revertir las tendencias negativas abogando por un nuevo modelo de desarrollo urbano que promueve la equidad, la prosperidad y la sostenibilidad medioambiental.

La Nueva Agenda Urbana es una contribución relevante para el éxito de la Agenda 2030 para Desarrollo Sostenible y para el bienestar de miles de millones de personas.

Estamos a tiempo para hacer de la urbanización una estrategia para el desarrollo, una pieza central de las políticas de prosperidad, tanto a nivel nacional como local.

Tenemos que abordar la urbanización no como un gasto, sino como una inversión, ya que el coste de la urbanización es mínimo en comparación con el valor que puede generar.

Debemos mirar a la urbanización como una estrategia de transformación social que genera nuevos empleos y una amplia gama de oportunidades laborales que nos permita afrontar el reto más importante de nuestra sociedad en los próximos años

Este momento requiere un retorno a los tres principios básicos de la urbanización:

En primer lugar, el reconocimiento del fundamento legislativo. La urbanización debe basarse en el imperio de la ley.

En segundo lugar, la necesidad de un buen diseño urbano. La capacidad de la urbanización de generar prosperidad está íntimamente ligada al diseño físico de la misma.

Y en tercer lugar, la adecuada financiación. La urbanización es uno de los pocos fenómenos económicos en el que la inversión pública genera mucho valor privado.

Una ciudad sin un plan financiero está condenada al fracaso. Un buen plan financiero es garantía de generación de un círculo virtuoso de prosperidad.

Por el contrario, su ausencia lo que genera es un círculo vicioso de precariedad, inequidad y crisis social.

Una de las grandes aportaciones de Hábitat III a la Nueva Agenda Urbana es la necesidad de un diálogo reforzado entre los gobiernos centrales y los gobiernos locales.

Los gobiernos centrales tienen un rol preponderante en la elaboración de las normas del juego de la urbanización, las políticas de seguridad, las políticas de redistribución de la renta así como los mecanismos de financiación a los gobiernos locales.

ENGLISH

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to see the advent of the New Urban Agenda that we have successfully brought to life and to the commitments that we are about to make.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris agreement on climate change, the New Urban Agenda envisages cities and human settlements where everyone can feel a sense of belonging and have equal opportunities to participate in.

The New Urban Agenda advocates for open and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, including those in vulnerable situations.

The New Urban Agenda is a vision for a better and greener urban future where everybody has access to the benefits of urbanization - A vision where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and fundamental freedoms, including gender equality, guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded in the Universal Human Rights.

Integrated urban planning is in the core of the New Urban Agenda. We need to design our cities and territories in an innovative way with a long-term vision of a sound green economy, protection of cultures and inclusive cities for

all: only in this way we will we be able to build sustainable and safe societies.

There is an urgent need to rethink our mobility systems and change the physical shapes of our cities and mixed land use, prevent urban sprawl and avoid spatial and socio-economic segregation and gentrification.

The New Urban Agenda urges us to value public spaces, protect the environment and food provision and balance market-led spatial development with social and cultural values and sustainable local economic development. Everybody should have access to infrastructure, basic services, employment opportunities, and adequate housing.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I am inspired to see the visionary ideas of the New Urban Agenda - Together we have the knowledge to change our cities for the better.

This will require strong coordination among different planning scales, the policies that guide urbanization and among sectors.

I would like to appeal to governments, international and regional organizations and bodies, including UN agencies, international and multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, the private sector, and other stakeholders, to work together, minimize duplication of efforts and enhance coordination in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The New Urban Agenda envisages land and housing policy as a guide for the spatial development of our cities which should ensure inclusiveness, affordability and resiliency to disasters and climate change effects.

This vision that we share will come to be realised through a solid and consistent financing plan.

Guided by the New Urban Agenda, I would like to call for integrated financing frameworks that are embedded into coherent policy frameworks and fiscal decentralization processes.

The good news is that urbanization generates value and wealth, and will provide the value required by itself, but to achieve that objective a **value sharing policy** is absolutely needed. Without it there is no way that sound urbanization can be properly financed.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Most of all, we need commitment. Last year was historic in terms of commitments to improve the living conditions of our common world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Among the SDGs especially SDG 11 recognized the crucial role of cities and urbanization as an endogenous source for development.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, among others, paved the way for the New Urban Agenda.

We need commitment to make a change – we need to face the real Gordian Knot of urbanization. Urban land legislation at the service of the common interest; effective legislation on value sharing; a public private partnership where every part plays by the same rules.

Urbanization well done is a very creative aspect of the human society and a very efficient instrument of development. But it does not come without a very

committed and participatory process, with transparency, public and private accountability and a radical stance against corruption.

Over the three past years I have seen very important contributions by the United Nations system, local governments, and other stakeholders at the three preparatory committees of the Habitat III process.

Over 40 UN agencies, funds and programmes organised under the UN Task Team for Habitat III, the GAP constituting 16 Partner Constituent Groups and over 1100 unique organisations with over 58000 networks were involved in the preparations of the New Urban Agenda.

I would like to commend the General Assembly of Partners for Habitat III.

I am delighted to announce that we were able to pull together throughout the entire Preparatory process for this conference over 36,000 participants from 142 countries. We held 7 thematic meetings across all regions, 4 regional meetings, over 35 urban breakfasts, over 22 Urban Journalism academies, and over 22 National Urban Forums in all regions.

These preparatory sessions brought forth 11 regional and thematic Declarations and 10 Policy Unit recommendations, and over 101 National Reports were issued by the National Habitat III committees.

These extremely fruitful outcomes account for the distinct interest and myriad of partners towards the future of cities and the New Urban Agenda.

This process has represented an extremely high level of participation in the history of the United Nations. For the first time local authorities participated were given the opportunity to participate formally in consultations in an inter-governmental process.

I would like to commend the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Gov-

ernments for their leadership and contribution to the process.

This clearly shows me that together we are stronger and we have been able to create an immense wealth of knowledge of urbanization and an inspiring roadmap for its future direction.

This participation and political commitment needs also to go into actions. I envisage to see that the New Urban Agenda becomes a key instrument for national, sub-national, and local governments and all relevant stakeholders to achieve sustainable urban development.

I am urging all of you today, to come together, to bring your various skills and knowledge from all fields of expertise and to work together to implement this New Urban Agenda in your own countries at all levels of governance. Let the Habitat III legacy be one that we are proud of, and which our children and grandchildren can enjoy safely and happily.

The Quito Conference has provided a great opportunity for all of us to start building our partnerships through the Quito Implementation Plan, which already can count 36 voluntary commitments towards implementing the New Urban Agenda. This gives an excellent kick start for the major tasks ahead us.

Habitat III is a critical milestone in shaping the vision for the future development of cities and human settlements. Indeed, solutions for the complex challenges of urbanization can only be found by bringing together Member States, multilateral organizations, local governments, private sector and civil society. I thank you all dearly for your contributions and support throughout the Habitat III process and the task force entrusted with us by our respective nations.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee, Mar á de los Ángeles Duarte, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Ecuador, Madame Maryse Gautier from France and

Mr. Jaime Silva from Chile for their steady leadership and dedication throughout the preparatory process towards the New Urban Agenda. I would also like to thank the remaining members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their tireless efforts and contributions to the Habitat III process for the last three years.

Quisiera dar mi más sincero agradecimiento a los co-facilitadores de este proceso, a la Sra. Lourdes Ortiz Yparraguirre y al Sr. Dánaso Luna Corona. Gracias a su gran labor diplomática, compromiso e innumerables esfuerzos, tenemos hoy la Nueva Agenda Urbana.

También quisiera dar las gracias a los cientos de voluntarias y voluntarios quiteños por su gran ayuda durante esta celebración en Quito.

Señoras y Señores,

Permíame terminar estas palabras recordándoles que la urbanización es proceso colectivo de participación humana. Es el arte y ciencia de hacer ciudades. Ya lo advirtió Sófocles en el Coro de Antígona, cuando decía que “*muchas cosas asombrosas existen pero ninguna más que el ser humano (...) Se enseñó a sí mismo el lenguaje, el pensamiento alado, y la furia constructora de ciudades*”.

La urbanización debe continuar siendo una de los procesos más importantes para nuestro desarrollo. Hagamos juntos ciudades sostenibles.

Muchas gracias.