

Honorable Chair,
Honorable Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat,
Distinguished delegates, and
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the government of Ecuador and the city of Quito for hosting Habitat III in this beautiful UNESCO world heritage city.

It is my great honor to address you on behalf of the Republic of Korea at this crucial conference to discuss theme of sustainable cities and human settlements for all.

It has been 20 years since Habitat II conference reached a global consensus on the critical importance of ensuring decent housing for all, and sustainable human settlements in the age of urbanization. Some progress has been made since Istanbul. Many countries achieved economic growth and development in tandem with urbanization, which drastically reduced the number of people living in poverty and increased access to decent housing and adequate urban services. Institutions were established or strengthened to improve urban services and increase housing supply.

However, much work remains to be done. Reckless urban sprawl, lack of developable land, excessive energy use, severe environmental degradation, inadequate supply of decent and affordable housing for middle and low

income people, insufficient budget of local governments and increasing natural disasters due to extreme weather events remain serious problems facing many countries around the world.

In this context, the New Urban Agenda to be adopted here at Habitat III points to the way forward to make our cities more sustainable, resilient and inclusive. The real challenge lies in finding the effective ways to implement the New Urban Agenda by engaging all actors at all levels. In this regard, cooperation between central and local governments is very important in national urban policy-making.

Let me briefly mention Korea's experience on urban development and the role of national urban policy.

It would be fair to say that Korea has successfully managed rapid urbanization during the period of remarkable economic development over the past 50 years. The country's urbanization rate jumped from 39% in 1960 to 50% in 1970, and spiked to 81% by 1990. Urbanization slowed down subsequently but continued until it reached a plateau at 90%. The current level is 91%. There are some contributors to getting the urbanization right in Korea. The country was able to tap financial wealth and human resources that the country accumulated in its cities, and had the policy framework and effective institutions to execute policies. The provision of infrastructures such as roads, public transit, and water supply systems was coordinated with the supply of housing through new town

development.

In short, national urban policies were instrumental in managing challenges posed by rapid urbanization in Korea. As the pace of urbanization stabilized and some city centers started losing population, urban regeneration became a new agenda for national urban policy.

Another recent focus on national urban policy in Korea is the promotion of smart cities. By applying cutting edge ICT and green technology to urban policies, a smart city approach can contribute to making cities more sustainable, enabling them better face the climate change and to improve the delivery of urban services to their citizens as recognized in the New Urban Agenda. Korea has embraced the idea of smart cities in the early 2000s and developed various models of smart city ranging from new city development to urban regeneration.

In conclusion, I hope that Habitat III will serve as a milestone event in our joint endeavor to achieve sustainable urban development by generating fruitful outcomes. The Republic of Korea highly appreciates the efforts of UN Habitat and member states in this joint endeavor and is committed to sharing experiences and expertise in urban policies with member states.

Thank you for careful attention.

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