

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

**Mr. President/Madam President,
Distinguished Heads of States,
Honorable Ministers and Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the government and people of Ecuador for hosting this important and well organized Conference in this beautiful city of Quito and the hospitality extended to my delegation. I would also like to thank the UN-HABITAT Secretariat for excellent organization of this Event.

Mr. President/Madam President,

Urbanization has taken an important position in the global discourse on sustainable development. Accelerated urbanization and concentration of urban population in metropolitan areas has become a distinct feature of Iran's urbanization phenomenon. During the 15 years from the Habitat II, Iran's urban population has increased by 45.7 percent.

The population of the Tehran Metropolitan Region, the most populous area in the country, has grown from 10.3 million in 1996 to 14.59 million people in 2011. Other metropolitan regions of the country also have experienced tremendous population growth in their regions.

Mr. President/Madam President,

To manage this rapid urbanization process, in addition to the existing development plans, several new plans have been introduced and adopted at the national, regional, and metropolitan levels.

A National Physical Plan was prepared and approved in 1997. It has introduced an urban system wherein the hierarchy of urban services provision is facilitated, the appropriate sites for future urban expansion and growth of cities has been identified, and a set of appropriate rules and regulations for land use for the entire Iranian territory have been devised and enforced. It is currently under revision.

At the metropolitan level, the criteria and indicators for identifying country's metropolitan regions have been introduced and metropolitan plans have been prepared for the country's metropolitan regions and they are under implementation.

A National Urbanization Policy is currently being pursued by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development that would be added to the existing tools to manage the rapid urbanization process of the country.

Mr. President/Madam President,

One of the adverse effects of rapid urbanization has been urban sprawl. To address the urban sprawl, two agencies have been established (i) to undertake upgrading, renovation and regeneration of urban informal settlements; and (ii) to develop new towns to provide adequate and decent housing for excessive urban population.

In the field of urban management, one of the most important approaches adopted by the government during the past two decades has been the integration of decision-making processes. The approach has been pursued to reduce the government agencies' role in the cities management and their devolution to the municipalities at the local level.

Another important occasion during the recent two decades in the area of urban management that allowed a new organized capacity of communities and grassroots in the administration of the cities was the establishment of Islamic Councils both in cities and rural areas. These councils that are directly elected by the citizens have assumed a part of the previous municipal functions.

Mr. President/Madam President,

Access of different groups of the society to adequate and decent housing has been one of the focal points of the government in the five-year development plans of the country. Since Habitat II, four five-year development plans have been prepared and implemented in Iran. Amongst the important goals of these development plans for the housing sector have been improving access to adequate and decent housing and provision of basic services for all households.

The government has also pursued integration of social welfare and social security with housing plans, incorporating a “Social Housing Program” in its agenda. With the direct collaboration between all agencies involved in social and supportive policies, the Program is seeking to design and carry out housing provision projects for the 40% low-income groups within the framework of social welfare and enabling programs. The government has tried to provide the middle-income groups with housing through such policies as development of savings and loans plans and increase of banking credits. Another approach pursued by the government in housing provision schemes is to pay attention to the local and regional characteristics and develop housing plans according to the regional features. Totally, the new approach of the Iranian government is based on the following policies:

- Develop housing provision plans within the framework of comprehensive social welfare policy;
- Optimum use of the market mechanism and government’s intervention only in case of market failure;
- Expand savings and provide facilities for housing purchase and construction in order to enhance the access of middle-income groups to adequate and decent housing.

Mr. President/Madam President,

Despite all the efforts taken during the past two decades since the Habitat II conference in Istanbul, in order to ensure that urbanization contributes effectively to sustainable development, a number of major challenges should also be addressed:

- Due attention should be paid to the threats and opportunities posed by rapid urban growth. There is a need for an active support from different spheres of government to ensure a coordinated approach to planning and managing cities and towns. This could be made possible by the adoption of ‘*national urban policies*’ by the governments.

- ‘*Quality of life*’ should be at the center of the efforts to develop sustainable human settlements.
- Efforts should be made to regenerate national identity and to increase the ‘*sense of belonging*’ among our citizens.
- Fast, safe, secure and organized mobility is an important agenda in our integrated land use transportation policy. So the importance of land use and transportation interaction should be revived by introducing ‘*rail-based public urban transportation system*’ in large cities and metropolises. Also, due attention should be paid for the ‘*integration of inter-urban and intra-urban transportation*’ systems.
- The share of public transportation in ‘*urban mobility*’ should be increased by development and expansion of urban railroad networks.
- Regular ‘*monitoring*’ of all adopted development plans and their ‘*periodical revision*’ should be considered as serious elements of the planning process.
- In preparation of master plans for cities ‘*local economic development strategies*’ should be given high priority.

Mr. President/Madam President,

The New Urban Agenda should address all three pillars of sustainable development by:

- 1) Promoting the economic role of cities in national development and recognizing the economic opportunities that they offer;
- 2) Paying due attention to cities as ‘Social Organizations’, composed of citizens and families as their nucleus. This should be considered as the fundamental policy for our national development planning efforts. Also the basic needs of the millions of people living in poverty within towns, cities and rural areas should be considered, and;
- 3) Addressing global environmental challenges such as climate change, unsustainable energy consumption, and the risk of disasters.

Thank you for your patience and attention.

