



LE GOUVERNEMENT  
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG  
Ministère du Développement durable  
et des Infrastructures

Département de l'aménagement  
du territoire

## **Statement Luxembourg – Minister François Bausch**

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Under Secretary General Clos,  
Ministers, Excellences,  
Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I want to thank Ecuador and the City of Quito for hosting this Conference.

In 2015, we as the global community have come together in Sendai, Addis Ababa, New York and Paris to set ourselves ambitious goals and pave the way for sustainable development. Luxembourg was in the fortunate position of holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the Paris negotiations and we are proud that we could play our part in coming to this historic agreement. Now we are here together in Quito to adopt a New Urban Agenda that will also contribute to the implementation and localisation of these agreements.

Sustainable development in its three dimensions only makes sense with a full contribution of the cities.

The New Urban Agenda will be a key instrument to achieve sustainable urban development.



As the former deputy mayor of the City of Luxembourg and now Minister responsible for sustainable development, I want to focus in particular on environmentally friendly and resilient urban development.

In order to fully harness the opportunities offered by rapid and increasing urbanisation, we have to put quality of life at the centre of our efforts.

Our cities face a number of environmental threats, including the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity, air and water pollution, natural and man-made disasters, and of course the effects of climate change. It is at the city-level and through knowledge exchange that we need to find adequate responses to these threats. Sustainable urban development is therefore not an option, but an imperative.

Cities are crucial actors for climate change mitigation and adaptation due to the concentration of population and economic activities, but also due to their vulnerability. Therefore, they are in a position and, to some degree, also under the moral obligation to lead by example.

There are a number of levers that cities can pull in order to achieve sustainable urban development and reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. We need to protect, preserve and promote urban green infrastructure, such as forests and



parks, and the vital ecosystem services that they provide. Green infrastructure reduces air pollution, the urban heat island effect and storm water runoff, and it promotes biodiversity as well as the quality of life and health of citizens. What we need in cities is contrasts in land use instead of the uncontrolled growth of concrete, monofunctional deserts.

However, the promotion of urban green infrastructure is not enough to reach our ambitious goals. Sustainable urban development can only be achieved through the sustainable use of land. In order to prevent and contain urban sprawl, we must encourage adequate densities and compactness for urban extensions. In a small country like Luxembourg, the sustainable use of land is a priority.

If we ever want to achieve sustainable urban development and reach the goals of the Paris Agreement, we certainly have to tackle the question of urban mobility. Sustainable urban mobility projects can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution as well as greenhouse gas emissions. We therefore need a new focus on soft mobility and zero-emissions public transport. More than that, we need integrated urban planning that aims at linking the dimensions of living, working, and leisure. In the end, the best kind of mobility for the environment is the one that you can avoid. If we want to achieve the transition to a carbon-neutral society, we need



affordable housing and efficient, zero-emissions public transport exactly there where new jobs are created.

Sustainable urban development also requires the sustainable management of natural resources in cities and environmentally sound waste management that focuses on reducing, re-using and recycling. This will allow us to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

One of the methods to achieve our goals is the smart city approach, which makes use of digitalisation as well as innovative technologies to encourage inhabitants to make more environmentally friendly choices.

The current discussion in the context of urban policy mainly focuses on metropolitan areas and large cities as the main drivers of territorial development. However, a large share of the urban population worldwide, but particularly in Europe, lives in small and medium-sized cities and towns. These types of settlements have their specific potential in offering small, multifunctional and energy-efficient centres and creating urban-rural linkages. This potential must be supported by tailored and place-based policy interventions.

Sustainable urban development is an opportunity and a promise to improve the quality of life for all those living, working and spending their leisure time in cities.



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Let's get to work and let's make it happen.