



**Interventions by the Republic of Maldives
on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States
at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III (Surabaya)**

25 July 2016

Plenary Statement

Honourable Co-Chairs,

1. I deliver this intervention on behalf of the Alliance of the Small Island States (AOSIS). We align ourselves with the comments by the Group of 77 and China.
2. Let me begin my statement by thanking the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the City of Surabaya for generously hosting this important stage of the Habitat III process. We also are grateful for the Secretary-General of the Conference for the progress report on the Secretariat and for the work undertaken by the Secretariat and Bureau in preparation for the Conference. In addition, we would like to express our appreciation to the Co-Chairs for their efforts spent developing this final version of the New Urban Agenda outcome document.
3. As we reiterated from the beginning, AOSIS believes that the New Urban Agenda should be cohesive with our other global frameworks and agendas, well balanced between the three dimensions of sustainable development, and reflective of a diverse range of human settlements. As many SIDS have populations under 500,000 people or even 100,000 in entire countries, let alone in our largest urban areas, it is important that any resulting support mechanisms of Habitat III, from follow up and review to means of implementation, be accessible to urban settings of all sizes and realities in order to avoid leaving anyone behind. For SIDS, human settlements can mean small towns connected by villages stretching along a coast, small towns spread across multiple islands, or a city state, each with their own definition of “urban” and “rural.”
4. SIDS face numerous concerns related to sustainable urbanization including remoteness, smallness, limited resources, land scarcity, connectivity, related dependence on exports, and major threats of climate change. As such, we continue to also emphasize the value of capacity building for data collection and analysis as many countries, including many SIDS, lack the baseline data relating to urban issues necessary to realize the New Urban Agenda.
5. We believe that this latest edition of the text has done an effective job of managing the different priorities of member states, while also aiming to be clear and action oriented. We appreciate the inclusion of many points introduced by AOSIS and while there are other concerns, we believe the document would not benefit from significant new language at this point.
6. Specifically, we welcome the increased use of “cities AND human settlements” throughout the document to reflect the diversity of cities, towns and villages of varying sizes and structures. In addition, we welcome inclusion of “coastal management” and recognition of “land-sea” transport connections as for many SIDS, cities or villages rely not on land, but on oceans and seas for

connectivity opportunities, as well as “fishers” as many city and village inhabitants rely heavily on fishing for income. We welcome reference to cultural heritage and national ownership and local context as this is important for planning and policy decisions.

7. We also appreciate the references to resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production, as well as the importance of building resilience. Natural disasters pose existential threats to cities and human settlements, from the tsunamis and cyclones threatening coastal urban centers to the drought facing many land-locked locations. Unfortunately, many SIDS are facing multiple types of disasters simultaneously, making it necessary that any urban development also consider resilience.

8. This revised draft provides effective integration of all three principles throughout the different sub-sections, such as the inclusion of environmental and resilience concerns within the space addressing economic prosperity.

9. In terms of areas that we hope will be strengthened this week, we have a few points that we raised that were not incorporated that we still believe could benefit the text - in particular, further integration of the concept of long-term planning and a reference to risk assessments related to resilience, in order to better align this text with the Sendai Framework.

10. We hope to use our time efficiently this week to find agreement and to close negotiations on this draft outcome document. We look forward to coming together and offer our full commitment, Distinguished Co-Chairs, to you both as we dig into the text. Urbanisation may be a reality within many of our countries, yet we must collectively dedicate our efforts here in Surabaya to ensure that it can be sustainable. This text can enable our goal of making cities, towns and villages of all shapes and sizes drivers of sustainable economic opportunity, while ensuring ecological and public health, and as AOSIS, we have been excited to add the unique perspective of SIDS to this conversation.

Thank you.