

Co-chairs, Your Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honor and privilege to be here in this third PrepCom meeting of Habitat III to finalize the New Urban Agenda for the next two decades. On behalf of Government of Nepal and my delegates, allow me to extend deep gratitude to Habitat III secretariat and the people of Surabaya for their warm hospitality.

While whole of the world paces towards development, it is but natural for least developed countries like Nepal to witness the urban population triple in two decades. Despite several challenges, major achievements related to sustainable urban development in Nepal since Habitat II, 1996 include: empowerment of local government; innovations in planning approaches; increasing importance on risk sensitive land use planning with concern for earthquake safety; the response to climate change; and the preparation of relevant legislation and policy documents like Shelter Policy, Urban Policy, National Urban Development Strategy including National Plan for Safer Building Construction.

Co-chairs, since the very beginning of preparation of the National report for the Habitat-III, Nepal has remained adhered to the slogan of "Inclusive Cities: Resilient Communities". Eighteen months have passed since the PREPCOM 2 meeting in Nairobi. Within this time frame, the severe brunt of earthquake has affected our country; and the urban agenda for Nepal has become more relevant in terms of improving resiliency in communities. Time and situation has justified our slogan in this forum, where we are unanimously agreeing on how our cities should look like in next twenty years: cities for all.

After the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 the need for an apex-level body was identified and National Reconstruction Authority has been established for overall co-ordination and mobilization of resources for rebuilding process. The strategy to make all the implementing agencies responsible for planned urbanization is viewed as a critical element in the process of building back better as reflected in the Sendai Framework.

The Constitution of Nepal that was promulgated in September 2015 recognizes housing as one of the fundamental rights of citizen. We have prepared the national report for Habitat III in accordance with this essence. Five consultative forums: namely Youth Forum, local bodies Forum, private sector Forum, professional organization Forum

including academia and non-governmental forum of Civil society, NGOs, CBOs were formed. The urban issues and challenges including twenty years action plan in the national report have been derived from the various consultative meetings with these forums and National workshop.

Co-chairs, the new Urban Agenda for Nepal is expected to transform the country by paving the way to sustainable development and aims to integrate SDG 11 with the overall development perspective. It is expected that the plan of action for Housing and Sustainable Urban development for Nepal will provide an umbrella framework for key sectors to work in a more co-ordinated and collaborative way for sustainable urbanization. The plan has considered the possible impact on overall implementation of Post earthquake Reconstruction and has sought ways of integrating the reconstruction with the underlying principles of sustainable urbanization. And at this point, when the country is receiving substantial foreign support, it is essential to make provision that affected Country, Territory, City or Communities be encouraged to spend larger portion of ODA by themselves.

Along with the implementation of the New Constitution, we are shaping a new urban governance structure with the principle of subsidiarity. Local-national partnerships will be formed to create national system of cities and urban areas to ensure a broader financing base for investments and to facilitate spatial balance. The policy of investment will be pursued for enhancing partnership with the private sector. Special programs targeted to Economically Weaker Section and marginalised communities have been upscaled. Concept of smart cities, integrated settlement, model village, compact settlements and 'one city one identity' for planned urbanisation have already been initiated.

Least developed countries like Nepal needs to undergo a paradigm shift in terms of the new type of competence aimed at scaling up of the good experiences for making a greater impact. Challenges persist and new issues arise. But with adherence to a significant mission and specific goal, the new urban agenda will definitely be fruitful and a large step towards achieving sustainable urbanization.

Thank you.

