

Statement by the United States on Follow-up and Review of Habitat III

Delivered by Ian Klaus, Deputy Special Representative for Habitat III

May 20, 2016

Conference Room 1, Informal Negotiations on Habitat III

Thank you, co-chairs.

In the view of the United States, the correct starting point for a discussion on follow up and review of the New Urban Agenda has to be to acknowledge the broad spectrum of actors that are already engaged in impactful and innovative work on the ground to drive sustainable urbanization. These are local, regional, and national governments, as well as civil society, academics, research institutes, foundations, tech innovators, networks of local authorities, UN entities, and others. And so any realistic follow-up and review framework needs to be based on this understanding and be balanced accordingly. With this in mind, we think the current draft does not adequately capture such a balance, as it prioritizes and remains overly focused on the role of UN Habitat.

We think that the central aim of follow up and review is to identify the most successful policies and innovations, to elevate those actors with the best solutions, and to foster meaningful dialogues so that these solutions can be widely shared and adopted. In this sense, a follow up and review framework should grow organically as innovators work, solutions emerge and dialogues develop. We should use existing mechanisms, reporting tracks, and platforms to support this goal and UN Habitat has an important role to play in this regard.

UN Habitat currently produces an annual report on the implementation of Habitat II for the Second Committee of the General Assembly. We would urge Habitat to make better use of this tool to make a more significant contribution to the discussion on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We support accurately reaffirming Habitat's mandate, which we do not believe the New Urban Agenda currently does. UN-Habitat can also continue to play a coordinating role via the existing reporting processes related to the World Urban Forum.

The zero draft raises the possibility of improving UN system-wide coordination and coherence in the areas of sustainable urbanization, a goal that we support. We have seen that interagency working groups can be useful tools because they can encourage UN entities to rise above their own specific interests in order to engage in a broader discussion that allows the UN to better ensure coherent and coordinated delivery across the UN system. It has been our experience that such task teams work best when they evolve organically, are voluntary, when the members feel ownership of the group, and when the work of the group benefits all members. The Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology, and Innovation, is a good example of such an endeavor and we strongly support its work. With this in mind, however, we believe it is not appropriate to use

the New Urban Agenda to grant a new mandate or any formal recognition to UN Habitat to lead such a group. While we value UN-Habitat's work, it is not the only international organization active in the urban context, as UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank, and even UNHCR all have substantial urban portfolios.

Furthermore, one of the central tenets underpinning the discussion of follow-up and review of the SDGs is that the integrated and cross-cutting nature of the agenda precludes any single institution or forum from claiming exclusive ownership of or responsibility for the review of a specific goal. This concept enjoyed consensus among member states and was included in the SG's report on follow-up and review at the global level. Therefore we cannot accept granting any formal role to UN Habitat in SDG follow up and review. Additionally, the 2030 Agenda outcome document made it clear that Member States bore primary responsibility for their own economic and social development and the follow up and review of the agenda. We think the same holds true for the New Urban Agenda, and a statement to that effect should be added to the zero draft.

We support the draft's reference to the need to generate evidence-based and practical guidance for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda but believe UN Habitat should do this through its existing mandate and toolset. There are already many multistakeholder platforms for discussions on sustainable urbanization and we are not convinced of the need to create a new one here. We also believe it is not appropriate to single out specific regional declarations, as this is a clearly unbalanced representation of the views of member states.

As noted in our general statement, we also do not believe the New Urban Agenda is the appropriate place to get into a discussion of changes to UN Habitat's governing structure. Such a technical discussion belongs at the Governing Council of UN Habitat and risks distracting us from the real task at hand, namely, creating a balanced and inclusive framework for supporting the follow up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

Thank you.