

U.S. Statement: Consultation on the New Urban Agenda for Habitat III

Delivered by Nancy Stetson, US Head of Delegation for Habitat III and U.S. Special Representative for Global Food Security

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I am delivering this statement on behalf of the United States of America.

Habitat III is an opportunity to develop local solutions to urban challenges against the backdrop of the historic global agreements of 2015— on sustainable development, financing for development, and climate change.

That is why the United States seeks a New Urban Agenda that considers the views of all stakeholders and emphasizes that urban solutions must be tailored to local conditions. It is not possible for national governments or any one particular organization alone to address today's urban challenges. We should identify principles that national, regional and local governments can follow to help enable cities to address urban opportunities and challenges, rather than impose top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches to urbanization.

Broadly speaking, the United States would like the New Urban Agenda to focus on the following areas: climate change, resilience, good governance, inclusiveness, data, and access to financing.

- **On Climate change:** The rapid pace of urbanization means that it is critical for urban areas to take action on climate change while providing for the needs of their citizens to access basic services, live healthy lives, enhance their skills and knowledge, and pursue livelihoods.
- **On Resilience:** A city's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the chronic stresses and acute shocks that they experience affects how its citizens, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems survive, adapt, and grow. Quite frequently, this means that cities, towns, and rural areas, must work to meet these challenges together.
- **On Good governance:** Urban governance capacity should expand to meet a long and growing list of challenges, including 1) accountable, participatory and integrated urban planning, 2) supporting legal and institutional arrangements for regulating service delivery at local levels, and 3) fostering inclusive communities to enhance security and counter violent extremism.
- **On Inclusiveness:** The New Urban Agenda must address inequality and take into account the voices and experiences of the members of the poor and vulnerable and marginalized groups, including racial and ethnic minority groups, women, youth, persons who are LGBT, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced populations, and indigenous populations. Such social inclusion enables political empowerment and economic growth and innovation.

- **On Data:** There is a paucity of reliable and comparable data for cities around the world and our understanding of urban data trends is weak across a variety of sectors. This does not mean that we need a new set of indicators. It means we need to improve and refine the scope, availability, timeliness, accessibility, and use of urban data globally for improved decision-making so that scalable solutions can be developed based on sound evidence.
- **On Access to financing:** In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the New Urban Agenda should support the effective mobilization and use of three streams of capital—private investment, domestic resources mobilized by developing countries themselves, and foreign assistance. It should also take note of the steps that can be taken to enable cities to mobilize local resources and build their capacity for generating and managing local revenue.

The United States strongly believes that the New Urban Agenda can add greatest value by identifying practical policies that promote action. It is critical that the New Urban Agenda focus on the actions that must be taken to address the daily challenges of urban dwellers instead of focusing on abstract “rights based” approaches. The United States cannot support the use of the New Urban Agenda and the Habitat III conference to identify new rights.

We take the need for a broad, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder approach seriously, and this is reflected in our own national preparations for Habitat III. In December 2014, the United States launched the U.S. National Preparatory Committee for Habitat III. This committee includes representatives from over 40 organizations from government agencies, academia, philanthropy, civil society, and the private sector.

We strongly believe that without participation by all stakeholders, the New Urban Agenda will lack legitimacy. This is why we joined others in advocating for regular Member State and civil society input into the New Urban Agenda at the April 2015 PrepCom in Nairobi. The result was a resolution requiring the Habitat III Secretariat to regularly consider both Member State and civil society inputs and integrate them into the New Urban Agenda zero-draft.

All of us here understand the enormous challenges of urbanization and its impact on public health, food and water security, sustainable transportation and energy systems and climate change. Poorly managed cities are breeding grounds for crime, poor governance, corruption, violent extremism, and inequality. Cities face overlapping challenges, be they natural or man-made disasters, disease outbreaks, mass migration, or humanitarian emergencies. However, just as importantly, we recognize that urbanization offers unparalleled opportunities for inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability.

How we decide to shape the urban environment over the next twenty years will determine whether cities become drivers of innovation, economic growth and opportunity or whether they deepen inequalities, poverty and instability. This is why the New Urban Agenda must not be limited in focus on the roles of national governments or particular players, but must reflect a

whole of society approach to fully harness the potential of urban centers as engines of global security and prosperity for all. Thank you.

Drafted: IO/EDA:KMassoudAnsari x7-1307

Clearances: S/P: RKlaus –(ok)
S/GFS: EBuckingham –(ok)
USUN/Nairobi – TGlucksman – (ok)
HUD – JScheid – (ok)
EB/TPP: AAnwar – (ok)
USAID/PPL: JSzuchman – (ok)
OES/PPO: EWharton – (ok)

Info: USUN/NY: RSinger
PA/IGA: LRenta