



## Country Statement – Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Delivered by **H.E. Sayed Sadat Mansoor Naderi**, Minister of Urban Development and Housing,  
on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF UN-HABITAT  
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*Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Governing Council,*

1. I am deeply honored to join you today at the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. It is a special occasion for me as this event marks my first engagement representing the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a full member of the Governing Council. On behalf of H E President Ashraf Ghani, I express our gratitude to the United Nations Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC, for accepting our nomination and electing Afghanistan to be part of the Asia and Pacific member states group.
2. The theme of this session “Opportunities for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda” marks the international commitment to continue the momentum of HAB III. Urbanization and sustainable development which fosters equitable, inclusive, and safe human settlements are also the ideological underpinnings of my tenure.
3. Afghanistan is among the flag bearers of the New Urban Agenda. Our Urban National Priority Programme is a blueprint for urbanization in 2016 to 2025 and is consciously aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the NUA. Urban Urban National Priority Programme has mainstreamed human rights and citizen engagement, safety and security, transparent and accountable governance as key principles that will shape our policies over the coming decade.
4. I take this opportunity to present before you three main challenges confronting Afghan cities – (i) integrating refugees and returnees, internally displaced populations and marginalized sections in urban areas, (ii) urban development set against a backdrop of economic instability and insecurity, and (iii) financing and implementing durable housing and livelihood options at a rapid pace. These concerns are not limited to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, in the current geopolitical environment, nations from Central Asia, Arab peninsula and Africa are also experiencing similar state of conflict and fragility and instability.
5. Resilience in the face of these difficult challenges tests leadership and political will. I am proud to say that my ministry, with support from the Government of Afghanistan has demonstrated that perseverance and commitment can lead to innovation under trying circumstances.
6. Over the last two years, under my leadership, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing has implemented and committed to flagship programmes, such as, State of Afghan Cities, Future of Afghan Cities, Sustainable Housing Programme, Cities for All and Citizens’ Charter which put people at the center

*Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

7. Afghanistan is amongst the fastest urbanizing country in the world. By 2030 we will double our urban residents. Since 2002, over 5.6 million Afghans have returned from neighboring countries and as many as 40 percent have not been able to integrate in their original locations. To give you a perspective on the scale of the challenge, more than 1.2 million persons are internally displaced in Afghanistan. We are responding to these critical concern by placing the

urban agenda on top of our national policy reforms.

8. To achieve our vision, we are balancing high-level governance with high-impact grass-root flagship projects. Afghanistan's Urban National Priority Programme is a high-level policy blueprint with three focus areas – first – “Strengthening urban governance and institutions, second – Adequate housing and basic services for all, and third – Harnessing urban economy and infrastructure”.
9. As part of flagship projects of the above blue-print, our President has launched “City for All” programme with a commitment to provide secure tenure for more than a million families in next three years. This programme is the first of its kind developed by any nation in 21st Century and I thank UN-Habitat for their technical assistance in balancing long term programmes with stop-gap measures.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

10. We are leading by example. Afghanistan is among the first countries to promote and formalize Citizens' Charter as a new compact between the state and the citizens. Citizens' Charter Programme aims to build state legitimacy and end fragmentation to demonstrate the government's commitment towards ensuring basic minimum services reach all citizens.
11. Urban peace-building and safety is a core thematic area unique to the fragile contexts. The Afghanistan Urban Peace building Programme addresses this complex relationship between governance and peace. It promotes peacebuilding and state building by strengthening the delivery of services, especially related to security, local government responsiveness and accountability.
12. Seamless coordination, collaboration, accountability, and monitoring across government agencies and stakeholders is an important ingredient to ensure sustainable partnerships and showcase political will. Under the direction of H.E. the President, a National Urban Council has been established to streamline urban development policies and programmes.

*Distinguished Members,*

13. To conclude, it has been my privilege to present the urgent concerns of fragile and conflict affected countries at international platforms, such as, PrepCom3, HAB III, APMCHUD, and now at this esteemed event. Global forums have the potential to be an invaluable channel to share the common concerns, chart out collective strategies and commit to a strong leadership and collaboration amongst us all.
14. I express my appreciation for the strong leadership of Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director, in his unwavering support to Afghanistan and strengthening partnership between UN-Habitat and our Government.
15. We look forward to proactively elevate the challenges of fragile and conflict affected countries at the general debates and wish us all fruitful discussions.