

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS
MEMBER STATES**

BY

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[Madam/Mister] President, Distinguished Ministers and Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States for this 26th Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

2. I wish to congratulate you [Excellency elected as President of this Session of the Governing Council] on your election as President of this Governing Council. I would like to also thank UN-Habitat for hosting this 26th Governing Council meeting.
3. By the middle of the 21st century it is estimated that seventy percent of the world population will live in urban areas. The fastest growing urban areas over the next 20 years will be in Asia and Africa. In this context of unprecedented urbanisation we should not lose sight that a third of the urban population still live in urban slums today even though strong efforts have been deployed to reduce them. This situation and prospects impose upon us all immense responsibilities. However, we need to take advantage of the opportunities of urbanization as an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development as well as environmental protection.
4. Our meeting these days in Nairobi takes place after a number of major UN conferences, notably the Habitat III historical Conference where the New Urban Agenda was adopted: a universal Agenda, which reflects the world's shared vision and joint commitment to harness the extraordinary potential of the rapid urbanization process for sustainable development across its social, environmental and economic dimensions.

We welcome the transformative New Urban Agenda and its result-oriented approach. It is a cornerstone in the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other milestone reform agendas of 2015, in particular the Paris Agreement and the Sendai framework for Disaster

Risk Reduction. The New Urban Agenda provides an important impetus to the implementation of SDG 11 as well as the other urban-related goals and targets that can only be achieved if cities are empowered to help turn them into action.

5. We will discuss during these days on the future of our collaboration towards a sustainable urban development. The EU and its Member States aim at promoting well-managed, liveable, socially inclusive and safe cities, where resilience, resource-efficiency, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity are achieved. A holistic approach to urban development, together with a long term vision, is necessary to develop the capability to achieve them. We consider that environmental aspects of sustainable development appear as particularly important to tackle challenges of urban development.
6. The European Union and its Member States believe the urban agenda must promote inclusive cities, tackling multiple aspects of urban poverty and exclusion, and with a focus on ensuring equal rights and opportunities and respect of cultural diversity. Furthermore, the urban agenda must promote attractive innovative and productive cities; with a focus on: inclusiveness, improvement of gender equality, youth perspectives, and job creation through innovation and business-friendly environments. Urban development, in this context requires first of all an educated, competent and highly skilled population. Furthermore, improving access to basic services and affordable as well as sustainable housing should be one of the urban policy priorities. Accessibility and connectivity of urban areas should be another important issue of urban policy, aiming to provide fast, safe, environmentally friendly transport connections, as well as effective and safe information communication technologies. Finally, we believe the future belongs to green, sustainable and resilient cities exemplified by resource-efficiency, improved air and water quality together with stronger resilience to flood, heat waves and natural hazards.
7. Good governance, decentralisation, gender equality, empowerment of local authorities, as well as policy coherence are all central to the work and vision of the European Union and its Member States regarding cities. They constitute a

corner stone of the success of any future urban agenda. The EU and its Member States are and will remain ardent promoters of good urban governance, including by supporting local authorities' capacity for urban sustainable development and promoting collaborative approaches amongst municipalities and other stakeholders.

8. The European Union and its Member States welcome the Special Theme of this biennial Governing Council session - "*Opportunities for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda*". It is a timely and useful contribution that will frame our discussions in the coming days. I am pleased to note that the ideas and vision promoted in this document may be globally considered as in line with our vision. The elaboration of the "Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda" (AFINUA) could be a good starting point for further steps and proceedings. I would like to underline now some complementary elements that in our view, would merit further consideration aiming at improving the final outcomes of the upcoming discussions:
9. As mentioned, we believe that good urban governance is crucial to achieve the ambitious objective of a paradigm shift in urban development. Subnational, local governments and other relevant stakeholders are the central actors and key drivers for sustainable development. By leading local processes involving all the relevant stakeholders, they are legitimate and relevant for providing innovative responses tailored to the needs of populations. Promoting **well managed and sustainable cities** is at the core of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. To this end, it is key to promote good urban governance and to take action towards, inclusive and safe, green and resilient, and prosperous and innovative cities.
10. Adopting an **integrated approach** when implementing the New Urban Agenda across several policies is of a major importance, notably in relation to land-use, urban mobility policies, as well as energy-efficiency measures.

11. **Migration policy:** we need to improve cities' capacities to adopt and enforce policies to address temporary and structural needs arising from migration flows, favoring migrants' integration and urban resettlement and specific attention to the refugees that require a differentiated and local response. In doing so, it is essential “to promote adequate services, accommodation, and opportunities for decent and productive work for crisis-affected persons in urban settings.
12. Mainstreaming **non-segregation and spatial integration measures** is needed to avoid marginalisation of population groups and prevent investments from establishing new isolated facilities or strengthening existing ones.
13. Implementing proactive **gender equality policies** in the urban context is a prerequisite for sustainable urban development policies. Tackling gender inequality, including elimination of all forms of discrimination, violence, and harassment against women and girls is essential in order to harness the potential of women as actors of change. Legal constraints on ownership and security of tenure, inequalities in income generation and access to livelihood opportunities, inadequacy of public housing conditions regarding social arrangements, cultural habits and physical security concerns, are a few examples that seriously undermine women's rights.

Moreover, women's voice and participation need to be encouraged in service provision and priorities for expenditure in relation to housing. Women's participation in and influence over the institutions affecting housing is of critical importance to ensure sustainable development.

14. **Environment and Climate Change:** in line with the agreed New Urban Agenda principles, we would like to express our renewed support to the commonly accepted vision envisaging cities and human settlements fostering mitigating and adapting to climate change. Cities that protect, conserve, restore, and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats, and biodiversity, minimize their environmental impact, and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

We are convinced that the successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda will improve urban dwellers health and well-being, foster resilience and protect the environment.

In line with the Paris Climate Change Agreement, climate change is one of the EU strategic priorities for a renewed partnership with third countries in cooperation for development. Climate Change threatens economic progress mainly in urban areas, jeopardizes peace and stability, increases cities' exposure and vulnerability to disaster risks. At the same time, there are significant sustainable growth opportunities, in particular for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and resilient infrastructure.

We are convinced that addressing climate change in a comprehensive and integrated manner is a necessary condition to for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. The European Union and its Member States are strong advocates of effective multilateralism with the United Nations. In the context of the global challenges we face, strengthening the UN, and increasing the efficiency of its functioning, including of UN Habitat remain our top priorities. We encourage UN-Habitat to fully commit to the UN wide Delivering as One approach with other UN entities and to engage in interagency coordination to better define its future contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its urban dimension beyond SDG 11.

16. The European Union and its Member States look forward to adopting the revised Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and Programme of Work for years 2018-2019. We note the efforts accomplished so far by the Secretariat on reorganisation and cost efficiency measures, in reference to the actual financial situation. The way forward still includes further major steps to overcome it.

17. The European Union and its Member States firmly believe that the effectiveness of UN-Habitat needs to be further enhanced, in particular in the light of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Thus the normative work of UN-

Habitat needs more attention, in particular with regard to the Follow-up and Review of the NUA. In this regard we look forward to the results of the evidence-based independent assessment of UN-Habitat of its normative and operational mandate, of its governance structure, including the oversight function of Member States, of its financial capability to the upcoming High-level meeting of the General Assembly which will discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in this regard.

18. To conclude, on a personal note, I would like to express my appreciation to Executive Director, Dr. Joan Clos and his team for the preparatory work carried out for the Governing Council. I would also like to thank the Committee of Permanent Representatives for all its hard work, which greatly prepared the ground for this 26th session.

19. The European Union and its Member States are in addition fully appreciative of the draft resolution on accreditation of stakeholders which now lays down the foundation for the effective participation of local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners in its deliberations.