

The 26th session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, 8th – 12th May 2017

Statement on behalf of the Slovak Republic

Mr. President, let me once again congratulate you to your election as the President of the current Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. You have my Delegation's full support.

Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States delivered yesterday. We would like to make some additional points in our national capacity.

The 26th Governing Council is marked with our focus on several key areas:

1. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its Goal 11
2. Implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement
3. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda
4. Developments related to the future mandate, structure and capacities of the UN-Habitat.

Last year, at the Habitat III Conference, we adopted a new 20-year vision on sustainable cities - the New Urban Agenda.

Although Slovakia is a smaller country, the urbanization process and the resulting structure of settlements in Slovakia provide many lessons learned. It was the result of the so called state-controlled post-war industrialisation that brought concentration of jobs and infrastructure into selected urban settlements. As an outcome, rural population moved to cities in large numbers, rural settlements were integrated into urban agglomerations and most of the inhabitants travelled from rural settlements to cities for work. As a result, in many cities the population increased more than five times. All this, supported by major developments in agriculture and rural areas significantly changed the economic basis of cities. Despite the fact that our case is, of course, different from the acute urbanisation of these days, we feel obliged to share our own experience with you, and that is – to avoid bringing a large number of people to cities without an economic perspective and never letting natural social connections deteriorate or vanish. All that needs to be done in this matter is to achieve effective partnerships at all levels and between all levels — beginning with partnerships of the UN agencies, continuing with the member states and local governments, all interlinked together, not forgetting about the fundamental role of the grassroots communities.

We would also like to stress the importance of inter-state and intra-state cooperation. Cities need to work together to create and harness the existing networks in order to effectively deliver on the New Urban Agenda. Very often, regional structures serve as a link, transforming global policies into national, tailor-made actions. There are two inspiring examples of such an approach that I would like to share:

1) First, the Urban Agenda for the European Union adopted in 2016 by all EU member states. It represents a new participative way of action to tackle the challenges of European

cities through partnerships in the fields of environment, transport, employment, and others. Slovakia currently coordinates the pilot partnership for housing in this context.

2) Second, the Geneva Charter on sustainable housing adopted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in 2015. The adoption of this Charter showed once again the relevance of regional structures to agree on common and shared principles of housing policies such as environmental protection, economic effectiveness, social inclusion and participation, and cultural adequacy.

Mr. President,

We all need to join forces for sustainable urban development. Cities are hubs of economic activity, cultural exchanges and social opportunities. They must be supported through innovative policies and out of the box approach.

By adopting the New Urban Agenda, we have agreed on the importance of making cities and urban spaces safe, healthy, inclusive, well-managed, resilient and green. The principle “to leave no one behind” on one hand and urban policies on the other, need to be linked with the objective of reducing poverty, enhancing equality, prosperity and affordable housing for all people.

With all this in mind, sustainable urban development will not become a reality if we are not mindful of the world’s environment. It is important to realize, that cities are the greatest polluters of the planet – they participate in the production of greenhouse gas emissions and the global waste by 70 % – and they are also the greatest energy consumers, reaching 70 % of global energy consumption. On the other hand, they represent the most vulnerable areas in regards to the impact of global warming. This is what we should take into consideration in the urban planning as well.

The New Urban Agenda is a cross-cutting issue and it is crucial to adopt an integrated approach across several related policies when implementing it. We all are urban actors and the New Urban Agenda recognizes the individual role of each and every actor and also our common responsibility to make cities and human settlements fit for purpose and fit for our future.

Slovakia remains firmly committed to further supporting the process aimed at successful and timely implementation of the New Urban Agenda and equipping UN-Habitat properly for the future in terms of its mandate, governance structure, management, financing and oversight, just like we have done in recent years at the CPR level, GC level and within the PrepCom for the Habitat III Conference and currently on the High-level Independent Panel to assess, enhance effectiveness of UN-Habitat after Adoption of New Urban Agenda and other relevant frameworks.

As the Panel prepares its report and recommendations for the Secretary-General, as we get ready for the August high-level meeting in the UN General Assembly and to subsequent negotiations, let us all proceed in a constructive spirit and aim for consensual solutions. We

certainly intend to continue playing active role in enabling such consensual solutions to prevail.

Key areas of our attention include overall effectiveness and efficiency on UN-Habitat, partnerships with other UN agencies and other actors including the private sector, regional economic commissions, regional and subregional organisations, etc.

There are numerous challenges but also many opportunities which we should take appropriate advantage of. Let's direct all our energy in that direction. As they say, where there is a will, there is a way.

Thank you, Mr. President!