



UN Major Group for Children and Youth

the space for children and youth in the United Nations

Statement, 26th Governing Council, 10 May

Children and Youth International on behalf of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth

Thank you for the floor. I am speaking on behalf of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth. Firstly, we would like to appreciate commitments by member states to enhance the role of young people in sustainable urban development. Since beginning of the Habitat III process, our constituency has been absolutely committed to the development of the New Urban Agenda and has demonstrated the capacity to build coherence between the work we are doing here with other key sustainable development processes taking place throughout the UN System.

We are gathered here, as always, to improve the effectiveness of the work of UN-Habitat. To do this, we must enhance the mechanisms by which UN-Habitat conducts stakeholder engagement, as well as build a strong New Urban Agenda follow-up and review process and enhance UN-Habitat's bonds with key UN entities already doing the the important work of supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other frameworks.

The current modality of the Governing Council does not provide a space for constituencies of rightsholder groups and other stakeholders to make their voices heard. As young people working on the ground with extremely limited resources and committing to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda on a voluntary basis, it is essential for us to have a designated space here, which permits us to self-organise and impact the outcomes of the deliberations taking place.

This can be actualised through the operationalization of the major groups and other stakeholders engagement modality within UN-Habitat, Please note, doing this would not be some obscure act. The operationalization of the major groups and other stakeholders modality, a modality born out of the sustainable development processes, sharing the key concepts with Habitat Agenda Partners, has become increasingly common among UN processes, including Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda. This would enhance the legitimacy of UN-Habitat and support its normative mandate. The idea is also strongly supported by New Urban Agenda, which addresses the role of "major groups and other stakeholders" in paragraphs 128 and 162. This has to be built on the Habitat III process, including some unique to sustainable urban development, and expanded to reach out to those most marginalised.

Now, in terms of the New Urban Agenda and its review, it falls short in providing an appropriate follow-up forum. The lessons learnt from Habitat II tell us that without a meaningful intergovernmental forum, the New Urban Agenda will lack the political attention and true government commitment necessary for its success. Considering that the Habitat III conference replaced World Urban Forum 8, the subsequent World Urban Forums have the potential to be upgraded into intergovernmental fora that culminate with the adoption of a negotiated outcome document.

Regarding the role of UN-Habitat in the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda, this requires a clear understanding of the nature of UN Habitat's role as a sustainable urban development focal point. The New Urban Agenda is not an urbanisation action blueprint for UN-Habitat, but a sustainable urban and territorial development framework for all member states, the UN family, and stakeholders. It is not the case that UN-Habitat will implement in a silo, but mobilise and coordinate implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This means building bridges throughout the UN System and seeking coherence between our work here with the work of UN entities acting as focal points for the implementation, follow-up, and review of critical global frameworks, from the 2030 Agenda to the Sendai Framework. Keep in mind, the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Ocean Conference, and the High Level Political Forum are all key action and review fora that demand our attention and are literally almost upon us.

Finally, we as children and youth, are committed to the implementation, follow-up, and review of the New Urban Agenda. Youth-led accountability of UN-Habitat is essential. The mandate of the UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board must be strengthened with improved transparency and accountability, as well as the operationalization of a modality for constituency engagement as mentioned earlier in our statement. We would like to request an Expert Group Meeting on Youth Participation within UN-Habitat to help formulate a way forward.

Thank you very much for your time and look forward to our continued engagement in this important work.