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Statement by Turkey

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Thank you, Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin my speech by congratulating you, Mr. President and the members of the Bureau for your election.

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in Habitat III, which was held in Quito six months ago, 26th Governing Council of UN Habitat under the theme of “Opportunities for the Effective Implementation of the New Urban Agenda” highlights the importance of effective implementation of the Agenda for the success of our new global vision for cities.

The successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda requires national and local authorities to integrate the goals of this global document to their national policies by taking into account their national circumstances.

Turkey, as the host country of 1996 Habitat II in Istanbul, attaches special importance to the global nature of the challenges faced by cities. These challenges, which are being addressed by 2030 Agenda, comprise not only specifically urban issues, but also, social, economic and gender aspects.

Our country has accumulated considerable experience and know-how and has built an institutional and legal framework that can be a model for most of the countries facing the similar problems of rapid urbanization.

Immediately after Habitat III, Turkey has launched the Second National Urbanization Council. In line with the New Urban Agenda, emerging challenges of Turkey’s urbanization are being evaluated with all relevant stakeholders. Our National Urban Strategy document which was adopted in 2010 will be revised in accordance with the results.

There are four main topics of our Second National Council. First, is promoting urban design and urban identity for better urban planning. Second, is new implementation and financing tools for urban renewal in areas under disaster risk. Third, is migration flows and social inclusion in cities. The last one is the roles and responsibilities of local governments in urban development. Under these topics, necessary regulatory arrangements and financing mechanisms will also be addressed.

Urban regulation and legal frameworks as well as financing mechanisms are fundamental for the implementation of national urban policies.

Turkey faces considerable challenges towards accomplishing the goals of sustainable cities. In our region, refugee flow causes an immense pressure on the cities.

Turkey is the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. The number of Syrian refugees welcomed and cared for in my country amounts to more than 3 million. Of these 3 million only a fraction, about 526 thousand, reside in camps; the vast majority are integrated in several of our cities, mainly in the South East of the country.

We have not only provided shelter, food and security to the refugees, we have also provided 20 thousand Syrians with working permits. Our schools are providing education to %60 of the refugee children population; which represent 836 thousand children. Furthermore, 14 thousand Syrians are now studying in our universities.

I should also get to your attention that more 200 thousand children from refugee families were born in Turkey since the beginning of the Syrian crises.

Besides providing education, our cities have also provided to the refugees systematic health care services to refugees. More than 1 million refugees have been treated in Turkey.

The financial burden that my country took on is totalling 26 billion dollars; of which 15 billion was provided by the national budget and 11 billion by municipalities and charities. We have only received so far foreign aid amounting to a mere 526 million dollars.

This refugee crisis represents, a huge burden, not only for our cities but for other neighbouring cities in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, taking into account the demographic and economic pressures already present before the Syrian crisis.

Another important challenge for cities, is the proliferation of terrorism and extremism conducive to terrorism.

In the light of these facts, UN-Habitat should seriously address the new and huge challenges to cities as highlighted in the New Urban Agenda.

More than ever solidarity and international cooperation is needed in these fields in the context of supporting the host of cities.

I would like to end my remarks to reaffirm that the New Urban Agenda shows the way forward and Turkey is ready to an action-oriented, efficient and transparent implementation, monitoring and follow-up process.

Thank you.