

**U.S. National Statement at the UN-Habitat Governing Council  
Delivered by Katherine Monahan, Head of Delegation  
May 8, 2017**

The United States would like to thank our hosts, the government of Kenya and the leadership and staff of UN Habitat. We appreciate this important opportunity to discuss with all of you how to set UN-Habitat on the best possible course to support the objectives of the New Urban Agenda. This Governing Council will cover many themes critical to the future of both UN Habitat and the New Urban Agenda. We recognize the need for action on adequate and affordable housing, in low-income as well as high-income countries, for homeowners as well as renters. We also understand the need for a housing-at-the-center strategy, and yet one that inherently integrates issues of broader planning, access and accessibility, transportation, education, health, jobs, basic services, community development, design, and community engagement. We strongly believe that UN-Habitat's interventions should target the most-vulnerable populations, while working toward social and economic opportunities for all. We look forward to considering with you all the role of urban planning processes in addressing the complex issues and conditions facing communities. We also look forward to discussions of new approaches to financing that will help ensure adequate and affordable homes in sustainable, vibrant communities for all.

Facing the shortfall in basic services in many developing countries, the UN-Habitat-established Urban Basic Services Trust Fund allows an expanded donor base to pool contributions in support of innovative, integrative solutions involving both international and local stakeholders. Having such a fund can catalyze much larger and more sustainable contributions beyond official development assistance, and tap the knowledge and capacities of non-traditional donors.

We are proud of the New Urban Agenda. We are eager to move forward on its mandate. We, the Member States, with the help of our best urban experts, spent months in difficult negotiations to come to agreement on the New Urban Agenda. As a key item of negotiation, given thorough consideration, member states agreed on UN-Habitat's role in the implementation, follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. We are not here to renegotiate that or other aspects of the NUA and we cannot agree to expand the UN Habitat role in implementing the NUA beyond what was decided in Quito. We will oppose any effort to introduce unnecessary language into resolutions not relevant to this theme; we will oppose resolutions that have nothing to do with the governance of this organization and those that only seek to politicize this council. There is no time for that. We have work to do. Our focus here should remain how to best guide UN-Habitat to collaborate and work with the UN system, member states and all stakeholders to support the New Urban Agenda with a focused mandate for UN-Habitat.

We maintain that we will never be able to accomplish the ambitious goals member states set without ensuring the proper collaboration of all stakeholders. We encourage UN-Habitat to do its utmost, as a focal point in the UN system on urbanization, to ensure the highest level of collaboration, to find synergies, reduce redundancies and find innovative opportunities in this process, as it informs its own strategies in support of the NUA.

We would like to thank the current Executive Director and his management team and highlight their efforts in recent years in working closely with member states, whether through the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the recently established Working Group on Program of Work and Budget or the Governing Council, to set UN-Habitat on the right track in terms of management and programmatic reforms. This success was seen in the largely positive assessment of the recent MOPAN 3.0 review. We encourage UN-Habitat management to ensure a smooth transition when the next Executive Director arrives in at the end of this year, including to help the next Executive Director continue reform and expand and deepen these efforts. As a recent UN Staff Survey revealed, there is still much room for improvement. Improving the ethics and working environment for staff will be critical to UN-Habitat's success and viability among member states and all donors.

Also critical to UN Habitat's long-term viability, and ability to restore donor confidence, is meeting the challenge to reign in the budget. In recent years, UN-Habitat set wildly unrealistic budget expectations. Donors will not accept such irresponsible planning going forward. UN-Habitat's record of consistently producing unreliable and inaccurate budgets leads us to support an enhanced role for member states in financial oversight. We support a requirement that UN-Habitat prepare a Budget Impact Analysis report for any proposed change to current programs and/or operations. Any report indicating a net increase in resource requirements should be submitted to the GC for approval. We also encourage UN-Habitat to seek innovative ways to expand its donor base, including to non-traditional donor countries, the private sector, foundations and international financial institutions. We see promise in its work with the World Bank in this regard.

Turning to the assessment currently underway that will ultimately help Member States' consider the best possible route to "enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight" of UN-Habitat. Above all, as requested by the General Assembly, the assessment of UN-Habitat should be both evidenced-based and independent, and the result should be a report containing recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and oversight of UN-Habitat as the primary means for its long-term viability, including by attracting voluntary financial support from member states and increasing donor confidence. The assessment should also include recommendations of how UN-Habitat can best continue to implement and expand on recent reforms, in particular with regard to strategic planning, including regional and country level

planning, evaluation, communication, ethics, results-based management and internal controls. Any assessment of the governance structure of UN-Habitat should consider all views and many options and explicitly include all costs and benefits, financial or otherwise, so that an informed decision may be made.

Finally, and of utmost importance, the assessment should not seek to modify UN Habitat's role in implementing the NUA, as already defined in the NUA, but should seek to clarify UN-Habitat's comparative advantages in the context of and compared to other entities in the UN system, and carefully consider its place within the UN system, looking at all options.

The United States looks forward to working with all of you here at the GC as we seek to set UN-Habitat on a better path, maximize its efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency, and most importantly maximize its impact on the ground.