



**The State of Israel**

**Statement by H.E Mr. Yoav Gallant, Minister of Construction and Housing**

**At the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development**

**17 to 20 October 2016, Quito, Ecuador**

Mr. vice president, ladies and gentlemen good afternoon.

It is a pleasure and an honor to be here today in Quito, Ecuador, on such an important occasion.

I would like to thank Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, UN Habitat Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos, and President Rafael Correa for hosting this most important conference.

It is a great honor to be a part of the important work led by UN Habitat, shaping together an international urban agenda that can help create better cities and ensure a better life for all.

As we convene here today, Jewish families all around the world gather to celebrate the festival of *Sukkot*, a holiday symbolizing equality, community, and nation building.

For the duration of this holiday, people leave their homes and live for a week within a *sukkah*, a temporary hut, built in the shared public space, as a reminder of what our forefathers experienced on their way to freedom after the exodus from Egypt.

When we leave our homes and comfort zones we experience the lack of permanent shelter and put in the center what really matters – the human dimension.



Mr. vice president,

The last year has been a very significant year in the global effort to achieve sustainable development. Together we adopted the SDG's as our new global compass, we reached the Paris agreement and we are here today celebrating the new urban agenda.

The state of Israel commends these important milestones and is committed to implementing them.

In its 68 years of existence, Israel has faced extraordinary challenges, in a way that has served as a source of inspiration for all.

We have achieved sustainable economic growth and rapid urban development, while at the same time absorbing vast numbers of immigrants from across the globe.

Our population grew more than ten times within 70 years, driving us to provide housing for all, while adopting innovative solutions and strengthening social solidarity.

Mr. vice president,

Today over 90 percent of Israelis live in urban communities characterized by a broad human diversity. This reality requires a unique solution, a solution that not only supports the need for connectivity but also a respect for differences.

In fact, nowadays, Israel is the only place in the region where diversity is not only respected but celebrated.



Mr. vice president,

Yesterday UNESCO adopted a resolution placing doubt on the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This resolution not only denies the major part of Jerusalem's historic and cultural heritage, but also greatly distorts and rewrites history for political gain.

Jerusalem, the city of David, is the beating heart of all three Monotheistic faiths. There cannot be a double standard where the international community sanctifies self-identity, while at the same time, denying in this resolution the core of Jewish identity.

Mr. vice president,

Israel is a developed country with a natural growth rate of 1.8 percent and a need to supply housing solutions to a rapidly growing population.

In order to address this challenge, Israel has in the past year launched the Israeli National Urban Committee which establishes an urban policy.

Furthermore, we have tripled the amount of urban renewal projects, revived neighborhood regeneration programs, increased the number of social housing units dramatically and subsidized affordable housing for young families.

Looking forward to habitat 4 we commit to continue on the path towards sustainable urban development. We wish to stand here before you in 20 years sharing with you the fruits of regional cooperation, economic prosperity and long lasting peace.

Thank you.