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At the United Nations Conference
on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

Quito, Ecuador
18 October 2016

Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the co-chairs, the facilitators in the preparation process, the Secretariat of Habitat III and all other related stakeholders for their excellent work to prepare for Habitat III. We also express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Ecuador for hosting this Conference and demonstrating their great hospitality.

Chair,

We live in the era of urbanization. Cities produce 80 percent of global wealth, while consuming 75 percent of resources and generating 50 percent of waste. Last year we defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the international community. In achieving these goals, it is no exaggeration to say that “our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities.”

Based on this perspective, we are adopting the New Urban Agenda here in Quito. It will stand as a remarkable accomplishment following various international agreements in 2015 from Sendai to Paris. This Agenda incorporates our collective wisdom, not only to solve the problems caused by rapid urbanization, but also to sustain prosperity for all of us into the future.

I would like to share some of my views on this Agenda by shedding light on three important aspects, which are: sustainability, resilience and inclusivity.

The first aspect is *sustainability*.

Looking back to the discussion at Habitat I in 1976, urbanization was recognized as a cause of the formation of slums and other issues that impinged on quality of life, and thus was to be prevented and contained. Then, the discussion at Habitat II in 1996 recognized urbanization as an inevitable process, and so we turned our focus to the positive aspects of

urbanization, especially those contributing to economic growth and social progress.

Subsequently it has become the common recognition of humanity that the global environment is finite. Moreover, we have come to understand the important roles that cities play in environmental preservation, such as, for example, drivers for the development and implementation of measures to combat climate change, as widely discussed in the process of adopting the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Now, as we gather for Habitat III, good urbanization must bring forth sustainability for the global environment in addition to the benefits of growth.

Japan has realized a high level of economic development despite being endowed with few natural resources. A strong desire to avoid wastefulness is deeply rooted in Japanese culture. Current efforts in Japan to minimize energy and materials consumption, to use products fully and repeatedly, and to convert waste products back into resources, which may collectively be called the Three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, are based on the historical wisdom that views urban activities as part of nature and has realized a sustainable lifestyle within that cycle. Japan is also working to advance the Three Rs internationally.

Now we acknowledge that cities are part of the global environment, and it is the cities that must become the greatest tools contributing to our sustainability.

The second aspect is *resilience*.

There was a large earthquake right here in Ecuador this year. According to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, approximately 98.6 million people suffered from natural disasters worldwide last year, and the number of victims in developing countries in particular is on the rise. While we cannot prevent natural disasters, but we can prepare for them and mitigate the damage they cause.

Urbanization which only emphasizes short-term economic development increases vulnerability to disasters. As stated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction last year, together with “mainstreaming and integrating disaster risk reduction into all policies, prior investment to reduce disaster risk is one of the most important measures to make our cities resilient.”

In this connection, I would like to stress the importance of “quality infrastructure.” Quality infrastructure, built in accordance with development plans and using proper

construction methods, is one way to ensure the resilience of cities to natural disasters. Not only that, but quality infrastructure also ensures the safety and amenity of its users and thus leads to improved quality of life and sustainable development in cities.

The third aspect is *inclusivity*.

In many countries, rapid domestic migration from rural regions to cities is causing the degradation of the urban environment. Such problems cannot be solved merely as an issue limited to cities but rather as an issue for the entire country. Actively advancing development in rural regions to reduce the economic disparities versus cities will in turn restrain the flow of the population to the cities.

The “balanced territorial development” emphasized in the New Urban Agenda means not only contributing to resolve problems in cities but increasing people’s wealth nationwide. Its effects go beyond improving the physical environment in major cities to also cover such social aspects as education and employment opportunities and empowering people. This is what we call a people-centered approach to development.

From the economic perspective as well, by fostering a well-educated middle-income class both in and outside of cities, Japan successfully boosted domestic demand, increased its level of industrial technology, and thus achieved further economic growth.

In Japan, in response to numerous problems caused by rapid urbanization and concentration in metropolitan regions, the Government has been pursuing balanced development using our National Spatial Plan as a major policy tool. Though such efforts, Japan has successfully achieved remarkable economic growth while at the same time reducing regional disparities.

The benefits of economic growth should be shared by all. Otherwise, its impact may be limited. The 2030 Agenda aims at creating a society with no one left behind. From our experience, I can assure you that strategic spatial planning is vital for achieving balanced territorial development.

Chair,

We are very delighted that after many months of deliberation, the New Urban Agenda is finally going to be adopted.

However, we are only at the starting point. We are now charged with the great mission of making this Agenda real, implemented by the Member States and many other concerned parties.

Keeping the aspects of sustainability, resilience and inclusivity in mind, Japan hereby pledges our firm commitment to contribute to the realization of the New Urban Agenda with the other UN Member States, UN-Habitat, and all other concerned parties.

Thank you.