

Country Statement of the Union Minister U Win Khaing, Ministry of Construction, the Republic of Union of Myanmar

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Myanmar is pleased to be here at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. The issues discussed in this conference, of how to deal with an urbanising world, are important today and will be even more so in the future. As Myanmar builds for a future towards democracy and development, we welcome the opportunity to join the international community in identifying shared approaches to meeting the challenges of urbanisation, and capitalising on its opportunities.

Myanmar stands at a unique historical turning point today. Preceding years have left the country as one of the least urbanised countries in Asia, the world's most highly urbanised region. As Myanmar's economy continues to grow in the coming decades, our country will face many of the issues that other countries have experienced: rapid rates of urbanisation will put pressure on housing, on infrastructure and transport systems, on the environment, and on communities and societies. As we work towards meeting these challenges and of maintaining an equitable balance between the urban and rural in a predominately agricultural society of 52 million persons, the combined international experience of the past decades provide valuable learning lessons, delivered through UN-Habitat, the wider UN system, and other international cooperation.

Urbanisation is central to national development, and Myanmar will capitalise upon the new opportunities that the urbanisation process provides. We recognise the importance of cities as productive centres of the economy and the importance of interconnectivity, as well as the role of urban-rural linkages in spreading prosperity which is created in cities to its surrounding rural hinterland. We also recognise that the future shape of cities will be key to many other sustainable development agendas, including the environment and climate change, education, sanitation, and health.

Ensuring an inclusive and balanced urbanisation is one of Myanmar's key policy goals. While capturing the benefits of urban population growth, we will seek to ensure that this growth is prudently managed, and dispersed amongst secondary cities. Myanmar is a deeply agricultural country with strong ties to the land; we will nurture these ties and increase rural standards of living, rather than encourage mass migration to cities.

## Excellencies,

In recognition of the new urban agenda, the government has committed to a number of priority programmes over the coming year to help achieve sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban development. This includes

- the launch of the million houses programme;
- the development of a National Urban Policy with housing for all at its centre;
- a pro-poor National Housing Policy
- the development of a new National Urban and Regional Development Planning Law, and a National Housing Law;
- for the first time, creating urban planning positions and the sub-national level under the Department of Urban and Housing Development.

We recognise the importance of planned city extensions, and are currently implementing these in large cities to accommodate for future urban growth. We are also addressing decades of underinvestment in developing and strengthening a national road network to facilitate movement around the country, and to our international neighbours to stimulate trade. By avoiding the well-documented problems of rapid urbanisation, Myanmar aims to become an international model for forward planning of sustainable urban development.

Myanmar acknowledges and affirms the New Urban Agenda. The agenda provides a strong foundation and set of principles, which can unify the world in its approach to our cities. However this Agenda will need strong and effective methods for implementation, and effective monitoring mechanisms. The vital ambitions of the New Urban Agenda will need to be incorporated into country-level United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks to ensure that this urbanisation is not excluded from United Nations support.

We recognise the support of the United Nations to date in supporting Myanmar, and other LDCs, in ensuring sustainable urbanisation through its Human Settlements Programme. We call for a reaffirmation of UN Habitat's mandate, and for a stronger and better-resourced agency.

In this time of transition in Myanmar, UN-Habitat has been one of Myanmar's main partners in ensuring sustainable urban development. In the wake of Cyclone Nargis, one of this century's greatest disasters, UN-Habitat was one of the first agencies to enter Myanmar and had a central and enduring role in providing housing and shelter for years afterwards. Its work today extends to critical land administration and management ; ensuring that our cities are resilient and disaster-resistant ; helping address the burgeoning issue of slums and housing affordability; and providing extensive support to the establishment of a national urban planning system through training, guidelines, and policy support. UN Habitat is a valuable ally in our goal to provide sustainable and inclusive urban development, with housing for all at its centre.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

In conclusion we call upon UN-Habitat to continue and expand its support in the area of slums, human settlements, and urbanisation. Recognising that urbanisation is inherently local; in the future there will be a need for UN Habitat to extend its cooperation to local and municipal governments.

The challenges of urbanisation are complex and numerous. However, so are the opportunities too. We call upon a forward-looking New Urban Agenda to help cities, states and nations to capitalise on these opportunities, while uniting with civil society to help meet its challenges. The New Urban Agenda should become a milestone in ensuring a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous future- Leaving No one Behind.

Thank You.