

United Arab Emirates

National Intervention during the third Preparatory Committee for Habitat III in Surabaya, Indonesia

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The United Arab Emirates Aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We would like to begin by expressing our **sincere gratitude** to the Government of Indonesia and the city of Surabaya for their generous hospitality and excellent arrangements, and to the co-chairs, fellow Bureau Members, and Secretariat for their preparatory work. We would also like to thank the co-facilitators for their consolidation of such numerous inputs over the past few weeks . We see the document as a **solid** basis for reaching an agreement by Wednesday that establishes a new international baseline and set of guidelines for sustainable cities and human settlements.

The UAE is one of the most urbanized countries in the world. We have faced and continue to face many of the challenges expressed in the room today on an extreme level, from water scarcity to fossil fuel dependence to 300% population growth in 15 years, including a globally unprecedented influx of expatriates.

We would like to make four observations from our national experience that bear directly on the New Urban Agenda.

First, **tolerance** is the underpinning engine of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The UAE is one of the most diverse societies in the world, and we believe firmly that our diversity has vastly strengthened our cities. Our open, competitive labor market brings in perspectives from all corners of the world on how to plan and run businesses, schools, cultural institutions, infrastructure, and every critical element of the city – making them more robust and more tailored to the needs of society. Consultative mechanisms in our urban planning agencies enhance this value proposition. We therefore call for a New Urban Agenda that uses **education, awareness-raising, and regulation** to embrace diversity, and to stamp out any violence and harassment based on cultural, religious, or other differences.

Second, gender equality must be at the heart of the New Urban Agenda, with women as agents of change in every sector. It is not coincidental that our cities have become economic powerhouses at the same time that we have implemented equal pay for equal work laws, board quotas, and education initiatives that now produce **more female than male university graduates**. We accordingly believe that the New Urban Agenda should endorse gender-responsive approaches to planning and execution in all sectors, and champion women’s meaningful involvement in all levels of decision-making.

Third, universal energy access must be a primary goal for the New Urban Agenda. Energy is the golden thread that links and enables all the Sustainable Development Goals and is absolutely critical for any form of economic growth and dignity.

But there is a golden opportunity that we didn’t have at Habitat II and that must be extensively recognized in Habitat III: renewable energy. Just last month, Dubai shattered its own world record on

solar costs. Solar is now **by far** the **cheapest source of new power** in our country, and real-time data from the International Renewable Energy Agency affirms that renewables, from wind to small hydro, are the cheapest source in a majority of countries now. We look forward to a New Urban Agenda that not only recognizes this cost revolution, but also commits to rapid deployment.

Fourth, recent years have seen an alarming increase in the number of **refugees, migrants and displaced persons** – with a disproportionate burden on urban areas in neighboring countries. We are particularly concerned by the health and education impacts of this change, particularly on women and children, and we would therefore hope to see a New Urban Agenda that gives special attention to their needs, as well as highlights the growing relationship between cities and humanitarian emergencies.

Lastly, we would like to highlight how important it is for the New Urban Agenda to be a **pluralistic** vision that equally values different systems and approaches that are working for different countries.

With this in mind, we **look forward** to engaging with all here today, and to reaching consensus on a New Urban Agenda that can see us through 2030 and beyond.