

U.S. Statement: July 25 Opening Session of New Urban Agenda Negotiations

The United States would like to thank the Government of Indonesia and the city of Surabaya for hosting this conference. We would also like to thank the co-facilitators for their continued efforts to bring together all Member State views in a New Urban Agenda that if successful can drive sustainable urbanization for decades to come.

As the current draft states, we have before us “a historic opportunity to leverage the key role of cities and human settlements as drivers of sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world.” This is also our chance to create an urban agenda that supports the historic global achievements of 2015—the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, and the Paris Agreement—and translate them into local action.

We are pleased to see several points of convergence among Member States on our shared objectives in this document. We are now at a pivotal moment and we have a choice. We can choose over the next three days to finalize the New Urban Agenda and move from Surabaya to Quito with the exciting opportunity to begin implementing this important work. Or, on the other hand, we can let this become a conversation on issues that are not fundamental to sustainable urbanization and will put at risk the very important work we’ve done thus far and the success of the Quito Conference.

We should not spend our time focusing on narrow interests or political disputes. Concepts that lack broad recognition and consensus among Member States, including the “right to the city” and the “right to development”, and concepts that are taken out of context, for example, “common but differentiated responsibilities” do not belong in what should be a consensus text. We also stress that language should be consistent with our recent historic agreements.

We have thousands of representatives from cities and civil society from around the world with us this week. This is a testament to the importance of sustainable urbanization. The New Urban Agenda is an ambitious agenda that is intended to benefit everyone – including our most vulnerable populations – and must be embraced and undertaken by all stakeholders. Much of the document reflects this inclusive approach, which should also be central to the follow-up and review section.

We reiterate our firm belief that designating one particular entity, whether UN-Habitat or any other, as the lead or coordinating organization, would be inappropriate, overly restrictive, limit the power, energy and momentum of diverse leadership, and stifle the innovation that comes from the broad range of stakeholders already doing excellent work in the field.

Our preparations for Habitat III in the United States over the last two years have demonstrated the importance of bottom-up approaches to urban development. Stakeholders from civil society, the private and philanthropic sectors, and local and regional authorities have told us that focusing on local problem solving, innovation, capacity building, and shared best practices and policies is where the impact from Quito will be felt. These same stakeholders will be the central actors in

shaping urbanization in the next 20 years. The plan for implementing the New Urban Agenda must have them in mind.

We have much work ahead of us to craft the New Urban Agenda we need to meet the challenges ahead. This once in 20 years opportunity to set the agenda is too important to squander. We urge all Member States to maintain focus on producing a new Urban Agenda that empowers all stakeholders to make a positive impact on sustainable urbanization.

Thank You.

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