

## **Opening Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

### ***3<sup>rd</sup> Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) – 25 - 27 July 2016***

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Under Secretary General Clos, Ministers, Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

We thank Indonesia and the City of Surabaya for hosting the third Prep Com of the Habitat III Conference. We also extend our thanks to all those contributing to the preparation of this gathering - the Bureau, the Secretariat and, last but not least, the co-facilitators.

Our aim for this Preparatory Committee is to find significant agreement to pave the way for the endorsement of a meaningful New Urban Agenda in Quito. Now is the time to act, and we urge all delegations to fully engage in this last leap of negotiations.

We also recall our commitment for a transparent and inclusive process. We thus welcome continuous engagement with all stakeholders and, in particular, with local authorities.

We look forward to a New Urban Agenda that enable us to respond to new and emerging challenges and opportunities. We agreed that this document should be a focused, forward looking and action-oriented agenda. What is at stake is the definition of a shared vision on how to empower cities of all sizes to translate the commitments from the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai framework.

We consider the NUA to be a cornerstone in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that transforms its urban-related goals and targets into city-specific recommendations.

Our vision for the New Urban Agenda is based on the recognition of urban diversity and on the understanding that an integrated and place-based approach to sustainable urban development, together with a long-term perspective, is necessary in order to promote inclusive and safe, green, resilient and low-emission, prosperous and innovative cities that are well governed.

Cities are key drivers for sustainable development. They have an important role in keeping development within planetary boundaries to secure human well-being. Moreover, rapidly expanding or shrinking urban population, climate change, air pollution, food security, waste management, water, energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable mobility should be prominently acknowledged and reflected in the New Urban Agenda, as they are key challenges and opportunities in a rapidly urbanising world.

We recall our strong commitment for a New Urban Agenda that keeps at its core a human rights-based approach. Human rights for all must be respected and protected in cities as well as elsewhere. The New Urban Agenda therefore must reaffirm the fulfilment of human rights for all, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in other treaties and agreements. This includes the right to adequate housing as a component of an adequate standard of living. We acknowledge efforts of states or cities to translate these commitments into their legislation, policies, and programs. This approach aims at offering a protective shield to the poorest and most vulnerable, thus contributing to tackling the root causes and effects of inequalities, urban poverty and conflicts through improved access to employment, inclusive and participatory decision-making and planning, equal access to affordable and adequate housing, tenure security as well as protection against forced evictions.

We fully support strong progressive language on gender equality and women's empowerment, in order to harness the potential of women as actors of change.

We welcome a strong emphasis on vulnerable groups and we support specific focus on the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular in conflict-affected areas.

We are committed to strengthen linkages between urban, peri-urban and rural areas through an integrated territorial development approach and to foster cross-sectorial coordination and cooperation among cities and towns within and across territories, fostering urban-rural interactions and connectivity, crate integration and mutual understanding.

Recalling the principles of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, we underscore our will to strengthen the capacities of subnational and local authorities in both access to financing and urban planning. We believe it is important that decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity is acknowledged as a critical aspect for the advancement of sustainable urban development.

We call for a strong follow up and review mechanism, that mobilizes all actors, including the whole UN system, sub-national and local authorities, and feeds into the one of the 2030 Agenda. This should be an exercise of coherence, complementarity and cooperation that will enable to generate a holistic outlook of progress at national, regional and global level and identify required integrated and systemic responses to achieving urban sustainability.

We also reiterate our firm belief that governance issues should be tackled outside the scope of the New Urban Agenda. We need to save such debates for those fora entitled to discuss and decide them, notably the UN General Assembly. Moreover, some aspects on which a consensus is not yet ripe may need more thorough discussions, in order to explore all options and alternatives.

Our efforts must focus on formulating a truly transformative agenda, so as to respond to the challenges of urbanization, while reaping its benefits. In addition to a solid follow up and review mechanism, the broad participation of the ones that master and bear the responsibility for cities – namely local authorities and other stakeholders - will be crucial to allow the New Urban Agenda to go beyond business as usual and realize our common objective – building sustainable cities for all.