



**Statement delivered by South Africa on General Reflections on the draft New Urban Agenda
at the Third Meeting of the Habitat III Preparatory Committee**

Surabaya

25 July 2016

Co-chairs,

South Africa would like to associate itself with the statement made on behalf of G77 and China and on behalf of the Africa Group.

Allow me to first of all express my delegation's sincere thanks and appreciation to the government of Indonesia for their generous hospitality and excellent arrangements for the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III.

We would also like to thank the Bureau and the co-facilitators for their hard work and unwavering commitment to capturing the wide-ranging inputs from member states and stakeholders, and ably synthesizing them into a coherent text, which we believe gives us a sound basis for our engagement here over the next three days. I also must congratulate the Secretariat for Habitat III for the solicitation and facilitation of broad consultation and engagement with stakeholders through the online platforms, the thematic and regional meetings, the informal consultations and hearings, in addition to the formal meetings of the Preparatory Committee. We are well-equipped with the technical inputs and perspectives to develop a New Urban Agenda that is universally applicable, aspirational, and transformative. We have come a long way since 2014, and if I reflect back on where we started at Prepcom 1, we believe there has been a major convergence on many critical elements.

Immediately prior to coming to Surabaya, we held a two-day working session with our sector stakeholders from national government, provincial government, local government representatives, civil society organisations, academics, planners, and practitioners, to engage on the draft New Urban Agenda and identify issues we would like to see included or enhanced in the New Urban Agenda. This is in addition to the intensive engagement we embarked on to

develop our National Report in 2014. As we engaged on the draft text, I was struck by the passionate engagement on the practical implications of the New Urban Agenda – our sector is already thinking about how the New Urban Agenda will need to be implemented.

South Africa's vision for the New Urban Agenda is one that galvanizes us to overcome segregation, exclusion, and inequality.

We cannot emphasise enough the need to recognize the need to harness urbanisation as a transformative force for structural transformation, which implies the economic transformation, the social transformation, and the spatial transformation of our cities and human settlements along the rural urban continuum. In contexts such as ours, massive historical burdens of economic exclusion and spatial segregation have to be overcome in order to achieve our developmental objectives. Faced with the rapid urbanization caused by both population growth and migration, we cannot only seek to fix what is currently not working, but need to anticipate the future. If we fail to do that, the toll in terms of worsening poverty, inequality, instability and environmental degradation will simply be too high. As has been repeatedly stressed by the Africa Group, we would like this concept of *urbanization as a process that can achieve structural transformation* to be captured in the New Urban Agenda text.

Co-chairs

Furthermore, the New Urban Agenda must be inclusive: this implies guaranteeing the right to participate in the development of cities and their surroundings for all stakeholders, with special attention given to people in vulnerable situations. It also implies ensuring access to technologies to enhance service provision and participation. It also implies addressing the issue of evictions in a fair manner and ensuring due process.

The New Urban Agenda must be long-term and integrated: New urban governance should allow for long-term public policies, beyond terms of office. It should also foster comprehensive public policies that involve the whole territory in a systemic and intelligent way.

The New Urban Agenda must ensure a multi-scale and multi-level new urban governance. This requires coordination between different levels of government and sectors of society, so that challenges that arise in cities and human settlements can be faced efficiently.

The New Urban Agenda must be territorial: Urban areas are not only the place where the majority of the population lives; they are embedded in territories where the built environment meets the natural environment. In a new urban governance, cities and human settlements must be seen and understood as a system of relationships between urban and rural areas operating as an urban ecosystem.

The New Urban Agenda must foster proficiency: Institutions and individuals should have the necessary skills to implement relevant public policies in a responsive and realistic way. For example local government must be empowered and capacitated to play its role in *planning, financing, implementing* and *managing* cities and human settlements.

The New Urban Agenda must be conscious of the digital age: new technological developments can assist local authorities in crafting more transparent, accountable, participatory and responsive governance systems. Digital era governance may also equip citizens and businesses with the ability to push for changes in society in a bottom-up fashion that might lead to a fundamental change in our economies.

The current draft text speaks eloquently in several places about the need for stakeholder partnerships, co-operation and engagement. However, we feel it does not sufficiently recognize and spell out the active contribution to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda that the stakeholders can and must make. We are thinking here specifically about the role of organized communities and the role of the private sector, whose roles can be more clearly elaborated on. For example, we could emphasise the notion of co-production of cities and human settlements with communities, and with the private sector.

Lastly, co-chairs we would be remiss if we did not emphasise the need for informal settlements and slums to be fully mainstreamed and addressed in the New Urban Agenda. We hosted a very successful Habitat III Thematic Meeting in Pretoria on informal settlements and slums, resulting in the Pretoria declaration. This declaration provides clear guidance on the importance of slum and informal settlements upgrading. Slum and informal settlement upgrading, particularly participatory slum and informal settlement upgrading, empowers communities and households in so many ways. Access to electricity enables the creation of livelihood opportunities in the home. It also allows the schoolchild to do her homework. Access to water and sanitation impacts on health and life expectancy. And tenure security enables families to invest in and improve their homes from own resources.

We look forward to fruitful deliberations over the next two days to finalise the draft Habitat III outcome.

Thank you