

17 October 2016

Secretary-General's remarks at Opening of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) [as delivered]

Es un gran honor para mí de estar aquí en Quito con todos ustedes para esta Conferencia Habitat III.

This beautiful city is the world's first to be declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, along with Krakow in Poland.

It reflects both the challenges of sustainable development and many of the solutions the world will need in the years to come.

I commend His Excellency President Correa for his personal leadership in support of sustainable urban development, and I thank the Government and people of Ecuador for hosting this milestone event.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Joan Clos, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, for the inclusive process that has shaped the Conference outcome.

The New Urban Agenda that you will adopt here reflects the broad participation of Governments and all urban actors.

It will set global standards for sustainable urban development and help us to rethink how we build, manage and live in cities.

The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development marks the culmination of an intense period during which the international community has defined a universal vision for sustainable development.

In Sendai and Addis Ababa, in Paris and Istanbul, and now here in Quito, Member States have built a substantial framework of commitments and action plans.

Together they support one common goal – the successful implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda is a comprehensive, inclusive, integrated and transformative blueprint for peace, prosperity, dignity and opportunity for all people on a healthy planet.

Achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals will depend, in large part, on whether we can make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

That is the focus of SDG 11.

More than half of the world population already lives in cities and human settlements.

Urban areas are expanding rapidly, especially in developing countries, and that expansion is frequently unplanned.

Approximately a quarter of urban dwellers live in slums or informal settlements.

Increasing numbers of poor and vulnerable people live in precarious conditions.

They lack access to basic services and adequate living space.

Many are isolated from opportunities for decent work and are vulnerable to crime, forced evictions and homelessness.

The pollution that cities produce and the products they consume have dramatic consequences for the environment.

And the energy they use is a major contributor to climate change.

So, it is clear that transforming our world for the better means transforming our towns and cities.

That means better urban governance, planning and design.

It means more investment in adequate and affordable housing, quality infrastructure and basic services.

And it means engaging women and girls in making towns and cities safer and more productive for all.

Member States have made a pledge to leave no one behind.

Today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Cities and towns have an immense role to play in ending poverty and building inclusive societies that promote participation by all.

Poverty is not simply measured by inadequate income.

It is manifested in restricted access to health, education and other essential services.

It is often accompanied by the denial or abuse of fundamental human rights.

Poverty is both a cause and consequence of marginalization and social exclusion.

To fulfill the promise of the 2030 Agenda, we must address the humiliation and exclusion of people living in poverty and empower their inclusion in building a better future.

In rethinking our cities, we must be guided by the principle of shared prosperity and inclusivity.

Cities are remarkable engines of growth, centres of diversity and hubs of creativity.

Let us use their potential to transform our world for the better.

The New Urban Agenda is an action-oriented document.

Its success will depend on the collaboration of all countries and all stakeholders.

We need a global partnership for sustainable development, encompassing national, regional and local authorities acting in concert with development partners, businesses, investors and communities.

Habitat III is laying a firm foundation.

Let us build on it.

I look forward to a successful Habitat III Conference that will help us advance our sustainable development agenda for the benefit of all mankind.

Muchas gracias por su determinación y su apoyo para un desarrollo sostenible para todos.