

Stakeholders' Address in the Opening Plenary, Habitat III

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Your Excellencies

The President of Ecuador

The President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Our kind host, the Hon'ble Mayor of Quito

Other Heads of State, Ministers, Heads of Delegations

Secretary-General of the Conference

Co-chairs and Members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee of Habitat 3

Representatives of local and sub-national governments, Members of the Global Task Force

Major groups and other stakeholders, members of the General Assembly of Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

My standing here today on this historic occasion of the opening of Habitat3, as a representative of the tens of thousands of stakeholders who have participated directly or indirectly in the H3 process, is an important, symbolic culmination of an exercise unprecedented in its openness and inclusiveness. Stakeholders have accompanied the Habitat3 process every step of the way – participating in Policy Units; serving on Advisory Committees of Regional & Thematic meetings; submitting concrete proposals for implementation of the NUA; engaging in multiple rounds of consultations, negotiations and lobbying, inside and outside meeting rooms, through the long hours when member states negotiated both openly and behind closed doors. We have fought hard for issues we wanted to see reflected in the NUA, whether it was the right to the city, or decentralisation, or climate change, resilience, disasters, conflicts and complex humanitarian crises, migration and refugees, or housing,

planning, land, the informal economy, decent work, mobility, public space, health, gender equality, child protection, safety and security, inclusion and accessibility. We have fought as individual constituencies, as well as collectively under the umbrella of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP). We won some battles, and lost others, but our fingerprints, I'm pleased to say, are all over the draft New Urban Agenda.

And just as a reminder, GAP was set up just 18 months ago, as a platform to organize stakeholders from all corners of the globe and bring their concerns to the Habitat3 process in a coherent fashion. It has expanded from 14 to 16 Partner Constituent Groups, attracting over 1200 members, in turn linked to about 58,000 networks, a veritable movement reaching out to a billion people. Our key submission - Partnerships for the New Urban Agenda - is a visionary document that enunciates the roles stakeholders are willing and able to take on in the implementation of the Agenda, many of which are diffused within the Agenda.

So let us take a moment to pat ourselves on the back. And another one to thank those who facilitated our engagement in the process. The Bureau, the H3 Secretariat, and Member State representatives, who initially tolerated and later encouraged and supported us, updated us in corridors and graciously accepted the multiple pieces of paper we passed on to and through them. I would like to thank all of you, from all of us. This has been a truly incredible exercise.

Excellencies:

The draft New Urban Agenda is agreed and about to be formally adopted. Our real task, of course, begins now. We have to find ways to deliver on the promises contained in the New Urban Agenda. At the same time, we must take stock of the weaknesses of the document, and see how these may be addressed in the implementation phase.

The implementation of the New Urban Agenda may not be a legal obligation of the Member States, but it is certainly a moral imperative, a new moral compact among member states, and between member states and stakeholders, to realize a new urban future, to switch from business-as-usual, to business-unusual. Let us resolve to use it

as a starting point, a minimum, from where to go forward, not an end goal, a maximum, a finish line.

Urban stakeholders, organized through the General Assembly of Partners, promise to stay fully engaged in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We will hold national governments to account, demand and support policy reform, work closely with sub-national and local governments, and with one another, build up and share knowledge, test and scale up innovations, and contribute to participatory monitoring and review. We will also keep looking for ways to pursue greater transparency and more effective stakeholder oversight of investments – public and private – made in the pursuit of sustainable, inclusive urbanization. We cannot become a more resilient, inclusive, just and peaceful society, unless all stakeholders are fully and effectively engaged!

Ladies and gentlemen:

The vision has been articulated. The time to act is now. The place to start is here. The ideas are all around us. The actors are all in this room – national governments, local and sub-national governments, civil society, women, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, farmers, grassroots, trade unions, business, professionals, researchers, parliamentarians, philanthropies, media, we are all here. So let us get to work, together, to ensure no one, and no city, is left behind.

Thank you for your attention.