Introductory Statement by Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director’s Informational Briefing to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

(b) Outcome of Rio+20.

Agenda Item 3 (b)

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

As you will recall, I have briefed you on regular occasions on our preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20.

Having just returned from Rio, I would like to brief you now on the highlights and outcomes of Rio+20 relevant to UN-Habitat.

The Rio+20 outcome document, titled “The Future We Want”, includes four paragraphs that are particularly important for UN-Habitat.

In the section on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements, the outcome document:
- Recognizes the need for a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements that provides for affordable housing and infrastructure and prioritizes slum upgrading and urban regeneration;
- Commits to promote an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements; and promote sustainable development policies that support inclusive housing and social services; and it
- Stresses the need to strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms or platforms, partnership arrangements and other implementation tools to advance the coordinated implementation of the UN-Habitat Agenda, and recognizes the continuing need for adequate and predictable financial contributions to the UN-Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation.

Other important issues in the outcome document that are relevant for UN-Habitat’s work include:
- Strong links between the paragraphs on cities and the preceding transport paragraphs;
- Recognition of water and sanitation as a human right;
- Clear road map for developing global sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be agreed by the United Nations General Assembly;
- Endorsement of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production;
- Growing political consensus about greening of the economy and the role of the private sector as an important driver for sustainable development.

During the Rio+20 conference, UN-Habitat organized and participated in more than 50 side events related to sustainable cities. I would like to cite a few examples:
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon applauded a crowd of Mayors and local government officials for advancing sustainability in their towns and cities at the Rio+20 Global Town Hall.
- In an event with the Secretary General and Heads of Agencies, I stressed the importance of sustainable urbanization and UN-Habitat’s aim to strengthen work with other UN agencies on the Habitat Agenda and towards sustainable urban development.
- At a four-day Global Town Hall meeting, Local and Subnational Authorities and their organizations stressed the need for multilevel governance for sustainable development, territorial cohesion and regionalization.
- Participants and panelists at the “Sustainable Cities and Innovation Dialogue” organized by the Government of Brazil, made several recommendations on urban planning, basic urban services and innovation for cities.
- President Rousseff announced the creation of the Centre on Sustainable Development (Rio+Centre), which will be based in Rio and which will have sustainable urban development as one of the focus areas.
- Eight multilateral development banks pledged to invest US$175 billion over the next 10 years to support the creation of sustainable transport systems.
- A High-Level Side Event on Future Cities and National Urban Policies organized by UN-Habitat, with Ministers from Norway and Singapore, discussed the importance of supportive frameworks in sustainable urban development.
- The Urban Summit at Copacabana Forte hosted by the Mayor of Rio, with UCLG and Metropolis, presented best practices and showed city results. This was also the venue where UN-Habitat’s “I’m a City Changer” Campaign was launched for the citizens of Rio.
- The Youth 21 meeting recognized the need for strengthened engagement at the local level.
- UN-Habitat launched a new series of ‘quick guides’ on Urban Patterns for a Green Economy.
- Other events included: a Cities Day as part of the Global Compact/Corporate Sustainability Forum; a Learning event on sustainable cities; the launch of a Local Sustainability 2012 report; the launch of the Urban Resilience Index Programme; signing of an MOU with Suwon City, Korea; and signing of an MOU with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) in the Ministry of External Relations.

UN-Habitat made several voluntary commitments to support Member States in pursuing the implementation of Rio+20 outcome document through promoting sustainable urban development.

In addition, several key follow-up actions will need to be taken in the coming months, including:
- Support to the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets;
- Enhanced UN coordination on sustainable cities, starting at the World Urban Forum; and
- Development of an “E-platform” for knowledge sharing on sustainable cities.

In this way, we hope to make strong connections between “The Future We Want” and WUF 6, the General Assembly, the 24th Session of the Governing Council, and the Habitat III Conference in 2016.

Finally, please allow me to thank the Government of Brazil for their wonderful hospitality in Rio de Janeiro and for their leadership in forging consensus amongst Member States on the outcome document.

I would also like to thank the Member States participating in the Group of Friends of Sustainable Cities for their support in promoting the sustainable cities agenda in the lead up to Rio+20.
Finally, I would like to thank the UN-Habitat team for a great joint “One UN-Habitat” effort in preparing and delivering UN-Habitat’s inputs for Rio+20.

Thank you for your attention.