



**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its MemberStates**

**By**

**H. E. Mr. John Deady**

**Ireland's Permanent Representative to UN-HABITAT**

**24th session of UN-HABITAT Governing Council,**

**Nairobi (15-19 April 2013)**

**United Nations**

**Nairobi**

**15 April 2013**

**(Opening Statement)**

Madam President, Distinguished Ministers and delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its MemberStates. The acceding country of Croatia aligns itself with this Statement.
2. I wish to congratulate you, Your Excellency Madam AmalPepple, Minister of Land, Housing and Urban Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on your election as President of this session of the Governing Council.
3. The prospect of more than two-thirds of humanity living in urban areas by the middle of this century imposes grave obligations. It provides us at the same time with immense and exciting opportunities.
4. The theme of this Governing Council reminds us that urbanisation provides opportunities as well as challenges. The role of cities as drivers of economic development has long been recognised. The EU and its MemberStates are firmly of the view that the more inclusive the approach to urban planning and its implementation, and to urban governance, the more powerful this effect will be. The participation of women, of young people, and of different social groups and communities in decision-making; fairness in access to credit; ease in the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises; equitable access to housing, mobility and education; respect for human rights in the application of the law; all these will help urban dwellers to thrive, and will most effectively reduce youth unemployment and foster economic development. The role of women, in particular, must be recognized as a driver in urban development, and women's access to urban policy-making processes should be strengthened, with measures taken to protect women and girls against all kinds of violence and harassment.
5. Continuing rapid urbanisation makes it inevitable that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the efforts of cities, and in cooperation with cities. Therefore, a holistic approach to urban development is essential for economically, environmentally and socially sustainable development, as highlighted at the Rio+20 Conference. While urbanisation has a key role in poverty reduction, it is also a driver of climate change, and the patterns of energy consumption in cities, and how that energy is

generated, must change if the inclusive green economy envisioned at Rio is to be achieved. National and local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that cities reduce their carbon output, and at the same time that they adapt to the effects of climate change that we already observe.

6. The role of urban authorities has been a critical one in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and this will also be the case as we implement the post-2015 development agenda, building on the success achieved in many areas of the MDGs, despite some very significant regional differences. The target for the reduction in the number of people living in slum conditions was exceeded by more than 100 per cent. At the same time, the number of slum dwellers has continued to increase. The lesson to draw from this is that while continuing to improve living conditions for those living in slums, national and urban authorities must pay closer attention to preventing slums happening in the first place. Spontaneous settlement in and around cities must be replaced by properly planned urbanisation, with an inclusive decision-making process and access to essential basic services; otherwise, given the rate at which people are migrating to the cities, the proportion of urban dwellers living in slums will continue to increase despite our best endeavours. Good governance and better planning will also help national and local authorities to address various forms of exclusion and marginalisation, to ensure that public spaces are used in a way that enriches the lives of citizens, and to fulfil their duty to provide for the safety and security of urban dwellers.
7. Reducing the number of slum dwellers will also require better attention to gender equity and access to reproductive health services as set out in the MDGs. Urban issues are closely inter-linked, but achieving population growth rates that are sustainable is an over-arching challenge. The links between life conditions in the urban environment and population dynamics will become more and more evident in the coming years.
8. We recognise no dichotomy between urban and rural development. Economic development does not stop at the limits of big cities, but encompasses also towns large and small, as well as the countryside. It is, in fact, impossible to isolate sustainable urban development from sustainable development overall. Therefore,

local authorities everywhere need adequately defined responsibilities, as well as the capacities and resources, to contribute to sustainability overall.

9. The HABITAT III Conference, which will take place in 2016, offers an opportunity to situate all these issues of human settlement and sustainable urbanisation within the New Urban Agenda. The EU and its member states look forward to an efficient and transparent preparatory process for this important conference in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/216. The active participation in particular of local authorities, as well as civil society and the private sector, as appropriate, will help ensure an effective preparatory process, which should be proportionate to resources. We have been presented with an ambitious proposal for inputs to the preparatory process, similar to the HABITAT II preparations. It remains unclear how the proposal in its different parts will be resourced and this is a cause for concern. We want to ensure that the preparations for HABITAT III are not at the expense of the implementation of UN-HABITAT's Programme of Work.
10. The European Union and its Member States are major partners of UN-Habitat. UN-Habitat has not in recent years been in receipt of sufficiently predictable and flexible funding for its core activities. We would like to thank the Secretariat for sharing with us details of the Resource Mobilisation Strategy which it is developing, and suggest that the best argument for enhanced funding would be success in exploiting its comparative advantage and in further sharpening its thematic focus. In implementing its mandate, UN-Habitat should also seek efficiencies through partnership with other UN programmes and agencies in accordance with the Delivering as One strategy, and with other relevant partners.
11. The European Union and its Member States look forward to adopting a new Strategic Plan and Programme of Work for the coming years, and to discussing with other member states how best to equip UN-HABITAT to meet the urban challenges of today and the future. We note with appreciation that since we last met in the Governing Council, the Secretariat has embarked on an ambitious transformation process. We welcome the steps that the Executive Director has taken to make the programme more catalytic, efficient, transparent, results-focussed and better able to exploit its comparative advantage and relevance in carrying out its mandate. We

strongly believe, and have done for some time now, that UN-HABITAT needs enhanced governance structures to ensure a closer working relationship between the Secretariat and the membership. Key elements of this would be improved oversight, transparency and accountability. We are committed to working for agreement at this Governing Council in the interest of a stronger and more effective UN-HABITAT.

12. To conclude, I would like to express the appreciation of the European Union and its Member States at the preparatory work for the Governing Council carried out by Dr. Joan Clos and his team. We would like also to thank the Committee of Permanent Representatives for all its hard work, which greatly contributed to the preparations. Last but not least, allow me to thank the Government and people of Kenya for hosting this session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT and for their kind hospitality.

ENDS