Thank you very much.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency the Vice President of Colombia Mr. Angelino Garzon and his wife Monserrat, and also would like to acknowledge his passion for cities and his interest in always addressing the issues of any city in Colombia as his own throughout his political career. Thank you, Vice President, for being here with us.

It is almost the end and I know we are excited with the love and the warmth that we have felt in the city of Medellin and especially through its citizens and all Colombians that have travelled here, and through its representatives I would like to truly express the thanks on behalf of the UN for the hospitality you have shown to us.

I would like to thank the Mayor who from the very beginning believed in this idea. I think it was six months before the Forum in Naples when he called me and told me – Joan, what do you think if Medellin runs for the process of becoming host of the Forum? And I answered with great pleasure as I am sure that Medellin can give a world class image of dedication, transformation will; and I must acknowledge that after this whole year, and this huge effort, you have lived up to our expectation; you have done a wonderful job; we all felt as if we were ‘paisas’ all along.

Anibal, thank you very much and congratulations.

In addition to thanking the Mayor for his hospitality, which has been extraordinary, I would also like to thank for the hospitality and cooperation Mr. Sergio Fajardo who has shown all along the way how he has the grip of what has been done and the vision he has for Medellin, for Antioquia, and for Colombia.

I think you can trust in these people who have clear and transparent political choices and represent a commitment with transparency, with the fight against corruption, which is commendable. Thank you. We have been friends for many years, and this friendship is renewed and it has gained new strength over the past few days.

And to the Government of Colombia, also represented here by Minister Luis Felipe Henao, I would like to wish you all the best. I know the challenges in your Country are huge, I know you are in the midst of very important processes, that you are growing, you are transforming, you are changing this Country, that you are fighting to pursue the most noble of the objectives which peace, and in this sense I wish you all the best as well.
I would also like each and every one of you; I think the video clips have been very representative of workers and participants alike.

I would also like to thank and ask a clap of hand for the group of staff of UN-Habitat that has stayed in Nairobi keeping our institution alive during these days.

Of course I would like to thank all the workers, professionals and dedicated teams of UN-Habitat led by our Deputy Executive Director Aisa Kirabo Kacyira. You represent the new UN-Habitat.

I would like to thank also the presence of the members of the CPR and the representatives of the Bureau of the Governing Council, especially the President hereby present, and all the rest of the members of the Governing Council and CPR in Nairobi. Thank you very much for making the effort to come to Nairobi, and work and participate on these meetings.

I would like to make a special recognition for someone who deserves a huge hand of applause, especially by the Governments of Medellin and Colombia, as well as from all Colombian people, the Ambassador Maria Eugenia Correa, ambassador of Colombia in Nairobi who has done a lot in order for this Forum to be possible.

Ladies and gentleman it has been a pleasure.

We have had 142 countries, 139 Mayors, 42 Minister, and more than 22,000 people. That is fantastic. I can state and do state this has been the best World Urban Forum ever at UN-Habitat.

You will stay in our heart because we will keep the best memories and will convey this to everyone.

And I would like to acknowledge and thank for the contribution of the family of the stakeholders of UN-Habitat, because the Forum is the day of the stakeholders. We created the Forum several years ago in order to hear the voice of the stakeholders, communities and associations, grass roots associations and the civil society, and all the people that are in the community life because it is they who represent all the citizens of the world that suffer the conditions of bad urbanization.

I am very pleased to have seen here a lot of our old friends and new friends: the World Urban Campaign, the Huairou Commission, the Sum Dwellers International, the Youth Assembly, the Grassroots movement, the UN-Habitat Parliamentarian Association, the UN-Habitat Professionals Association, AGI, UNACLA, the Global Land Tool Network, the Safer Cities network, the PSUP network. I am sure there are more, and forgive me for not mentioning all of you, because the list is very long and important. I must tell you that your voice is here. Here in UN-Habitat and in the Seventh session of the World Urban Forum in Medellin.

I would like to especially recognize that at this World Urban Forum we have heard also the voice of those strongly supporting a standalone SDG on cities and human settlements in the process of the post-2015 Development Agenda. There has been quite a number of very important associations, among which the UCLG, Communitas, Metropolis, and I would like to recognise that they have had a meeting which was filled with people and indeed it has been a very important support to the process for a better urbanization.

These voices represent thousands of local governments and partners worldwide, in the developed and also in the developing world; in addition, leading research institutions are also supporting the urban SDG. We know that transformative sustainable development is unachievable without sustainable urbanization in the world today. Member states have a compelling set of arguments to consider in deciding whether a standalone Goal is adopted. Thank you very much for your support.

I would also like to thank for the support for a new urban agenda in the coming years. I think the voice here in Medellin has come very clear from professionals about the need to change the paradigm of urbanization. I know that changing urbanization is very difficult, but we need to change urbanization. There is no excuse for that. There is no alternative. We are going to urbanize three billion more people in the next 30-40 years, and we cannot go on urbanizing with the system that we are following today. Because we are sprawling, we are diminishing densities, we are occupying arable land, and this is just unsustainable. In 30 years, 40 or 50, very soon, we are going to double the world urban population. There is no way to delay the decision. As we are meeting and debating here in Medellin, cities are still being built in the old fashion way. This is a responsibility for the Nations, for the Governments worldwide, because we are not going to win the battle in favour of sustainable development in the world if we don’t address the urbanization question. This is too clear already, as we research and find out the impacts of the emissions of greenhouse gases in the urban areas, as we see how we are increasing urban land comparing and competing with the agricultural land. We need to change. And this is particularly important in the parts of the world where urbanization is
going to grow more. This is why it is so important to develop national urban policies in order to attend the growth of the cities, and also and especially to attend and promote and incentivate the growth of intermediate cities and the growth of small villages, market towns in the rural areas, where we can get a lot of improvement on the overall scenario of urbanization if we are able to establish a kind of system of hierarchy between all levels of urbanization. The most important and most difficult thing in order to retain the population in rural urbanization, in villages and market towns, requires a lot of investments. And it can only be done with a huge support of central Governments.

I then encourage, after seeing the results of this World Urban Forum, and insist, that we see urbanization in its overall scope, from the urbanization of the big cities, as well as the urbanization of villages and markets. All of it represents the big challenge of urbanization in the next 40 years.

This is what I take as the message of this World Urban Forum. The fight for equity begins in the participatory and democratic elaboration of urban plans at all levels and sizes of cities in order to allocate for a proper public space, well connected, enough buildable plots to offer a huge supply of buildability in the different cities and in order to keep the prices of urbanization lower, and allow that urbanization and the right to the good city, the right to the city, reaches everybody, not just the rich people.

If we really want to fight for the equity in urbanization we need to address these topics. If we don’t touch these topics we will run the risk of just saying nice words. To address the issue of equity in urban areas, gender equality, social integration, mixed uses, etc., we need to go to the details, declarations are not enough, we need policies, commitments and we need resources. This is the big challenge for sustainable urbanization. I hope that now we are going to open, since this World Urban Forum here in Medellin, the way forward first to the sustainable development agreement in 2015, the climate change agreement in 2015, and Habitat III in 2016. I really hope that this debate, this interchange of ideas that has been created and initiated in Medellin will grow more and more, so that we reach Habitat III with all of our transformation power so that we can have true sustainable urbanization of the next few years, an urbanization for everyone, for the large majority and a popular urbanization that truly holds the virtue, the advantage, the options that cities offer to all of our population.

I would like to end here and simply say that I am deeply moved because of the warm welcome Medellin gave us, as well as Colombia, and I sincerely wish you all the best. We take with us a lot of lessons learnt from Medellin and Colombia. We have seen your relentless will to overcome difficulties, we have seen your determination to come up with creative, innovative, and genuine solutions to each and every one of your problems. This is what we are taking in our hearts and our minds. Thank you again very much Medellin, all the best in all your future endeavours which I hope will turn out to be wonderful. Thank you.