Introductory Statement by Dr. Joan Clos
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Executive Director’s Briefing to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Agenda Item 5

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Thank you very much Chair and Distinguished Delegates

Before anything else, I would like to express my condolences, in my capacity as the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, to the people and Government of Kenya who have lost many lives from the last terrorist attacks. I sure the sympathy is shared by all of the countries represented here.

I would like to inform you that the reports you have is the three-month report. The Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Housing was held on 17 and 18 of September where a Bureau of 10 members was elected and there were a number parallel and side activities including the ones coming from the local authorities and other stakeholders. There is a continuing close coordination with the Post-2015 agenda of the United Nations and also alignment with the Climate Change process.

From the outcome of the Prep Comm, we are encouraging member states to submit their national reports and contribute to the Trust Fund. The General Assembly is finalizing the discussions on the resolution now. In some days’ time we will have the final resolution in the Second Committee, which is the resolution of Programme no. 15, where both UN-Habitat and Habitat III are considered. Most of the updates regarding Habitat III will be provided this afternoon in the specific point of the agenda.

I would also like to inform you of the Climate Change Summit that took place on the 23rd of September 2014 because UN-Habitat played a very important role there. It was attended by more than 100 heads of states. UN-Habitat were tasked to lead the action area on Cities along with Michael Bloomberg, the UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change. We gathered in order to sign the Mayors’ Compact which gathered the representation of more than 2000 local authorities and city representatives around the world. It was really a strong commitment by the local authorities worldwide as regards the Climate Change. The partnership of this compact is standing and we would like to show the results on COP 21 in Paris next year. I was recently in Paris and I held talks with the French government and the City of Paris to prepare for this event. In this week there is the COP in Lima that is also going to take stock of what has been discussed until now.

There are very promising new events mainly coming from the new leadership and new expressions of interest presented by the Chinese Government and the United States Government. Apart from that, the Leadership Alliance of partners who would mobilize financial resources in order to favor implementation of projects in developed countries. This is directly related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Least Developing Countries.

The summit, under the leadership of UN-Habitat, proposed to take action on the Urban Electric Mobility plan. This plan aims at having more electric vehicles in the cities, and to reach a target of having electrification contribute to 30% of the total travel by 2030. I am pleased with the outcomes of the summit. For UN-Habitat, it was another occasion to diffuse the idea of the strong relationship between the current organization and the successful strategies for sustainable urban development in climate change.
I would also like to inform of Urban October that was held this year which was a campaign to raise awareness, participation, generate knowledge and engage the international community towards the new urban agenda. The Urban October consisted of 3 flagship events; The World Habitat Day on the 8 October, The Urban Thinkers Campus on 15-18 October in Caserta and the first ever World Cities Day in Shanghai China on 31 October, following the resolution of the General Assembly last year.

The Urban October was one of the most successful campaigns of UN-Habitat so far reaching thousands of people. It has also had a big impact in social media both in Asia, Europe, the United States and Africa.

The first World Cities Day was commemorated on 31 October hosted by the City of Shanghai in China and I would like to congratulate the Chinese hosts in making this event very successful.

Here in Nairobi we had the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and he marked the World Cities Day by visiting the Urban October exhibition here in the Gigiri Campus.

I would also like to make a mention about the 5th APMCHUD that was hosted in Seoul, Korea from 3-5 November. It was convened by the Korean government under the theme “equal opportunity for sustainable development”. I would like to thank the Korean government for the warm hospitality extended to me, my team and the delegates during this important meeting.

I am very pleased that APMCHUD agreed on the Seoul Declaration and even more important they agreed on Seoul Implementation Plan which is very specific and committed. I would say it is a very good document that I would recommend be distributed, because some lessons can be taken out of this strong commitment, especially in the implementation plan for more than the 30 ministers that were present.

I am also very pleased and grateful to see how the Government of India has taken the lead after Korea and is going to host APMCHUD in 2016, the year of Habitat III.

During the 5th APMCHUD it was also announced that Kuala Lumpur will host the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in 2018. I personally met with the Malaysian Minister of Urban Well-Being, Housing and Local Government, Hon. Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, in Seoul to inform him of the position and I look forward to working with the city of Kuala Lumpur and the government of Malaysia for the preparation of the Forum.

The proposal of Indonesia as hosts of the 3rd PrepCom of Habitat III was also announced during APMCHUD. This was later on formalized in the secretariat and General Assembly in New York. With this set of events, Asia is reinforcing its role in UN-Habitat and also in the preparation of Habitat III. We were aiming at having an important Asian contribution to the international debate on urbanization. With the next APMCHUD in India, the World Urban Forum in 2018 in Kuala Lumpur and the PrepCom of Habitat III in Jakarta, we have a promising group of activities. These are not the only ones as there are other regional regular meetings that will be in one way or another linked to the process, such as the regular meeting that is held in Singapore with Local Authorities and mayors. These altogether represent a new and strengthened commitment and representation of the Asian Region as a region in this process of the
preparation of the new urban agenda both for climate change for Post 2015 and the way towards Habitat III.

I would also like to mention that I have carried out a number of important missions, all of them with complex and full agendas, including for resource mobilization. I will mention the mission to India. I would like to thank the Government of India, especially the High Commissioner of India who facilitated the meetings with the National Government to have very positive conversations not just on the current issues of urbanization in India and the new programmes with the objective of building 100 new cities of more than two million each in the next years and the other programme of rehabilitating 500 existing cities in India. The new government of India has a very strong Urban Agenda and it has been an excellent occasion to establish a very fluid dialogue, following the mission by the DED.

I was invited by the government of India to attend the Municipalika conference which is the yearly gathering of the local authorities and mayors in India. It was also very important because local authorities in India need to be supported and empowered in order to manage with the magnificent programme of urbanization in India that is going to be implemented. I also had the opportunity to stress our financial inquiry to the government with the hope that in the future we will have a positive response.

I also had a mission to Washington, and an official visit to the government of the United States. I was received by the new Secretary of Housing and Urban development, Mr. Julian Castro, the former mayor of San Antonio. He is now playing a very important political role in the government of the United States and expressed to me the continuous commitment and support of the US government to UN-Habitat, Habitat III and the Sustainable Development Agenda and the specifics of urbanization in this agenda. I also visited the Department of State and our focal point in this department, Ms. Sheeba Crocker.

It was a very positive and fruitful interchange of ideas and the US is keen to see how UN-Habitat is evolving, taking more and more measures in order to increase efficiency and transparency. We had the results that we anticipated in our strategic plan.

I was also received by the government of France last week, including by their Director-General of Multilateral Affairs. I had the opportunity to strengthen the ties between UN-Habitat and the new French government. There were already some preparatory meetings at a lower level, and now we have a very good agenda of cooperation both in UN-Habitat and in Habitat III. Among the items discussed was the preparation of COP 21. This is going to be a very important event and the French government is interested in strengthening the presence of local authorities in the event. In fact, the City of Paris is proposing an offer that we have applauded, that the Petit Palais be where most of the events take place and where a big gathering of mayors will take place in order to win support for the expected agreements that will come out of COP 21.

In this line of political activity, I also wish to inform you that DED has been in mission on two occasions in Norway, who are a very strategic partner and traditional donor who we much appreciate for their efforts. She also visited Brussels for the European Development Days which is a yearly event that needed our representation since the European Union is our biggest contributor for the resources that UN-Habitat is mobilizing. This is a special occasion to relate to the European Commission, with whom
we have a very important process of negotiation for the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation programme with the countries around Lake Victoria. We are also initiating another one with Lake Tanganyika with five countries and working with the ACP, the APMCHUD programme on our flagship products. The DED also visited South Africa in October to participate in the Annual Human Settlements Conference that defines urbanization strategies. She also took the opportunity to meet the Minister for Human Settlements and other government officials during this visit.

I have also sent letters of special appeal to countries that have not yet provided their annual voluntary contributions to UN-Habitat this year, and we are focusing strongly in the area of Resource Mobilization where we continue to experience a shortfall in the contribution in our Core Budget which is crucial to our legal and strategic results and that provides essential support for our programmes.

We will come back to the agenda item on the Financial Status of UN-Habitat in the coming session. We would like to express our gratitude to the Government of Germany which has returned to the financing of earmarked funds with a contribution of US$ 1 million.

Thank you very much.