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Chair: Mr. Cardi (Italy)
later: Ms. Francis (Vice-Chair) (Bahamas)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 20: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
(A/69/298 and A/69/343-E/2014/64)

1. **Mr. Clos** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), speaking via video link from Nairobi, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/69/298), and the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/69/343-E/2014/64).

2. Turning to preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), he said that they continued to be guided by General Assembly resolutions 67/216 and 68/239, as well as UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 24/14. The Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for Habitat III had held two meetings during the reporting period. At the March 2014 Santiago session of the High-Level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, UN-Habitat had proposed the introduction of a new agenda item entitled “A new United Nations urban agenda”. The guidelines and format for the preparation of Habitat III national reports had been finalized and circulated to Member States in November 2013. Habitat III had been an important topic at the seventh session of the World Urban Forum, held in April 2014 in Medellín, Colombia, the outcome document of which, the Medellín Declaration, had focused on the need for a new urban agenda that captured the principles of integrated, inclusive and sustainable urbanization. The working group on Habitat III established by the Steering Committee of the World Urban Campaign had met to draft a twenty-first century vision of “The City We Need”. UN-Habitat had also launched an initiative on “Strengthening partnerships for a new African urban agenda”, with financial support from Nigeria.

3. Considerable progress had been made on regional preparations for Habitat III. In Africa, the fifth African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development had been held in Chad in February 2014.

In the Arab States, preparations for Habitat III were proceeding in close collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the League of Arab States, with meetings held in Beirut, Kuwait City and Cairo. In Asia and the Pacific, preparations for Habitat III had been discussed at the third session of the Committee on Environment and Development of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok in October 2013. In Europe and North America, the Habitat III preparatory process was proceeding within the frameworks of the Economic Commission for Europe and the European Union. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development had re-emphasized its commitment to Habitat III at a meeting in Mexico City in August 2014.

4. The most significant event in preparations for Habitat III during the reporting period had been the first session of the Preparatory Committee, held in New York in September 2014. It had elected a Bureau, consisting of two members per region, and had agreed on rules of procedure. The second session of the Preparatory Committee would be held in Nairobi in April 2015 with a view to preparing the substantive basis for the conference. He urged countries that had not yet done so to submit their national reports before the end of 2014. He expressed gratitude to the national Governments that had made generous contributions to the Habitat III Trust Fund, and to local authorities for their exemplary contributions to the preparatory process.

5. Turning to UN-Habitat activities since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/239, he noted that the Bureau of the UN-Habitat Committee of Permanent Representatives had been considering the timing of its governance review process in relation to the outcome of the Habitat III Conference. The first integration segment of the Economic and Social Council had been held in New York in May 2014, with the theme of “sustainable urbanization”, and had explored how urbanization could be viewed not as a problem but as a driver for wealth generation, job creation and inclusive development. The outcome of that segment would serve as the Council’s contribution to Habitat III. UN-Habitat’s involvement in preparations for the Climate Summit, held in New York on 23 September 2014, had resulted in a compact of mayors on climate action, a Cities Climate Finance

Leadership Alliance, and an Urban Electric Mobility Initiative. He expressed gratitude to the Shanghai City Council and the Government of China for their offer to organize the global celebration of World Cities Day on 31 October 2014. UN-Habitat had also published its 2013 Global Report on Human Settlements under the title “Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility”. That report argued that the traditional approach of building more infrastructure for cars was, at best, only a temporary solution; genuinely sustainable mobility required a combination of regulation, urban design and sound financial planning.

6. In January 2014, UN-Habitat had initiated implementation of its six-year strategic plan for 2014-2019, which contained seven focused thematic areas, including urban legislation, urban planning and design, urban economy and municipal finance, cities and climate change, and disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation. Demand for UN-Habitat’s support services was increasing as its portfolio expanded, and the linkage between normative work and technical cooperation that had become UN-Habitat’s defining feature was unique in many ways within the United Nations. Of the \$45.6 million required in Foundation general-purpose allocations for the upcoming biennium, only 14.7 per cent had been received or firmly pledged thus far, whereas 60 per cent of the \$325.7 million budget for earmarked activities had already been contributed. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat had continued to implement a resource-mobilization strategy aimed at widening the donor base for non-earmarked funds and to put in place organizational measures to reduce core deficits. Nevertheless, non-earmarked funds and additional regular-budget support were imperative if UN-Habitat was to adequately meet the demand from Member States.

7. With regard to Habitat III, he urged the General Assembly to finalize the organizational aspects of the Conference and the final Preparatory Committee meeting, and he encouraged Member States to expedite preparation of their national reports and to support national, regional and global preparations through voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. With regard to the UN-Habitat programme, he recommended that the General Assembly should give appropriate consideration to sustainable urbanization and human settlements in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and should increase UN-Habitat’s

regular budget to meet additional capacity requirements.

8. **Ms. Vilaseca Chumacero** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group wished to reiterate its position that the promotion of sustainable cities and human settlements would be a major development challenge over the next several decades. Humankind was already half urban, and projections indicated that 70 per cent of the world’s population would live in cities by 2050. With the rural-urban drift occurring largely in developing countries, promoting the resilience of cities against the effects of climate change was imperative. While the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) had recognized the potential of cities to generate healthy societies, the reality was that 1 billion people lived in slums, often in proximity to modern high-rise buildings that only served to highlight social inequalities.

9. Sustainable urban development required a transparent and inclusive approach that engaged all stakeholders. At the local level, city planners should stress people-centred objectives and participatory decision-making that included disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Developed countries needed to provide resources, capacity-building and technology transfer that went beyond even the measures listed by the Open Working Group under its proposed sustainable development goal 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The upcoming Habitat III Conference would be an opportunity for the international community to rise to the challenge of making cities safe, innovative, friendly, sustainable and productive.

10. The Group of 77 and China wished to reiterate its support for the offer by Ecuador to host Habitat III.

11. **Mr. Achargui** (Morocco) said that his Government had been awarded the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour in 2010 in recognition of its work to reduce slums, and in 2012 the Kingdom had hosted a conference entitled “Making slums history: a global challenge for 2020”. Habitat III had a special relevance for the African continent, where problems posed by population growth, natural disasters and climate change were particularly acute. Preparations for the Conference took on special significance as they coincided with other processes that would shape the post-2015 development agenda. In 2016, his country

would host the sixth African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development.

12. **Mr. Clos** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that there were indeed a number of upcoming conferences and processes that would determine the post-2015 development agenda, and he hoped that the Habitat III Conference, scheduled for 2016, would be the first major conference to implement that agenda. He wished to again congratulate Morocco on winning the Scroll of Honour award, which had recognized the Kingdom's leadership in providing integrated urban housing for those who could not afford it.

13. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM welcomed the progress being made in preparations for the Habitat III Conference, including the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee held in September 2014. It stressed the importance of voluntary funding to enable the full participation of all Member States, as provided for in UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 24/14. UN-Habitat would play a fundamental role in facilitating progress with respect to the Open Working Group's proposed sustainable development goal 11, on cities and human settlements.

14. Developing countries faced overwhelming challenges in the form of slums, poverty and inadequate infrastructure. The particular problems of small island developing States had been highlighted in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway), the outcome document of the third International Conference on SIDS. UN-Habitat had an important role to play in promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production while taking into account the economic and social needs of developing countries. National ownership and regional capacity-building would be crucial in ensuring adequate shelter, sanitation and energy infrastructure in human settlements. CARICOM encouraged UN-Habitat to continue its focus on effective advocacy, monitoring and partnerships; participatory planning, management and governance; pro-poor land and housing policies; environmentally sound basic infrastructure and services; a strengthened human settlements finance system; and risk and disaster management.

15. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that as one of the most urbanized regions in the world, CELAC wished to call attention to the relevance of urban sustainability to the post-2015 development agenda, which had been recognized by the Open Working Group's proposed sustainable development goal 11. It reiterated the importance of the outcome of Habitat II, in particular with regard to the provision of decent jobs, inclusive housing and social services for all, especially children, young people, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities. As Habitat III approached, it encouraged the Secretary-General to seek voluntary financial support as provided for in UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 24/14.

16. CELAC was acutely aware of the problems of social distress, geographical exclusion and environmental degradation in cities. By 2025, Lima and Bogotá were expected to join Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as cities with over 10 million inhabitants. That would create structural challenges that would require adequate political will and strong commitment from all local, national, regional and international stakeholders. CELAC welcomed the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee and looked forward to the continuation of an open and comprehensive intergovernmental preparatory process at the second session in Nairobi in April 2015. It wished to express its strong support for the proposal by the Government of Ecuador to host Habitat III, the first major United Nations conference of the post-2015 development era.

17. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that when sustainable development was neglected, the opportunities provided by urbanization became less tangible. The post-2015 development agenda would offer a chance to reaffirm the relevance of well-planned and well-managed cities as drivers for change. ASEAN welcomed the inclusion of sustainable cities among the goals proposed in the report of the Open Working Group, and thanked UN-Habitat for bringing human settlement issues to the forefront of the development agenda.

18. Despite the progress achieved in the wake of Habitat II, rapid urbanization in the developing world continued to produce slums, environmental degradation and inequality. Habitat III would be an opportunity to

get twenty-first century urbanization on the right track. The preparatory process should be participatory and comprehensive, and should include local governments and all other stakeholders.

19. Cities generated approximately 80 per cent of the gross domestic product in the ASEAN region, but high rates of rural-urban migration continued to create challenges. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community blueprint for 2009-2015 had highlighted some of the measures being taken in ASEAN countries to promote environmental sustainability while meeting social and economic needs, such as the Clean Air for Smaller Cities Project. With half of the world population living in urban areas, provision of affordable housing, public infrastructure and economic opportunities in cities should occupy a prominent place in the new development agenda.

20. **Ms. Kalamula** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the unprecedented increase in urbanization, in particular in the developing world and most acutely in Africa and Asia, was creating multiple new challenges to development. Much of the pressure in Africa was affecting small to intermediate-sized cities, which lacked the infrastructure as well as the financial and technical capacity to meet the demands of their growing population.

21. As large numbers of people moved from rural areas to cities, the potential benefits of urban life were threatened by such factors as climate change, resource depletion, food insecurity, economic instability, historic levels of unemployment and rising crime. It was vital to ensure that cities were inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. In fact, it was in cities that the battle for sustainable development would be either lost or won.

22. That did not mean, however, that issues affecting rural life should be left out of the equation. Issues of poverty in all its forms as well as inequality between city and rural dwellers needed to be part of a comprehensive approach to tackling sustainable urbanization in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

23. The Africa Group welcomed the progress made at the recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which had built on earlier conferences, including the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

and the special follow-up session held in Istanbul in June 2001 (Istanbul+5). As part of its efforts to help shape the post-2015 development agenda, the Group looked forward to participating in the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee. Africa's vision for those sessions, building on earlier discussions among African ministers of housing and urban development, would be set forth in a report entitled "Strengthening partnerships for a new African urban agenda" that had been spearheaded by Nigeria and Ghana. Along with the outcome of the fifth session of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in February in Chad, the Group's aligned input would identify key priorities in the area of cities and other settlements for the next 20 years.

24. **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa) said that South Africa fully supported the preparatory process for Habitat III and commended the Preparatory Committee's work to date. Taking into account the principle of geographical rotation and the capacity of the host country to deliver a successful conference, his delegation believed that the final Preparatory Committee session should be held in Nairobi, as the seat of the UN-Habitat office. In line with the inclusive process already established, all Member States, as well as other stakeholders, should have a chance to express their opinions on the draft outcome document before the final intergovernmental process was completed. In that regard, his delegation supported the proposal that the subject of Habitat III should be taken up at future regional meetings and trusted that the secretariat in Nairobi would ensure that the responsible entities were duly informed. His delegation maintained the view that urbanization, as per the Habitat Agenda of 1996, should be viewed as a transformational force for achieving sustainable development.

25. The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development was committed to collectively defining and promoting a common African position at the national and continental levels to address the challenges of urban development and human settlement in order to meet Africa's sustainable development agenda. South Africa was confident that future African Union summits and meetings of the Ministerial Conference would continue to engage on those issues in advance of Habitat III.

26. At the national level, South Africa had taken a number of steps to implement the Habitat Agenda since

becoming a democracy in 1994. The right to adequate housing was recognized in its Bill of Rights, while its Constitution proclaimed that housing was an inalienable right. The Government was therefore obligated to ensure that all South Africans had access to secure tenure, housing and basic services, facilities and infrastructure. In recognition of the complex challenges involved, South Africa had changed the name of its Department of Housing to the Department of Human Settlements and would proceed on the basis that human settlements development was not simply about building houses but also about creating cohesive, sustainable and caring communities.

27. South Africa had adopted a comprehensive human settlements development plan that stressed the intimate linkages between rural and urban areas. While cities were vital to the country's economic development and growth, rural areas were fundamental for food production, essential resources — in particular water — and migrant labour. The needs of both would be addressed under the new plan.

28. While South Africa was convinced that the Habitat Agenda of 1996 remained as valid as ever, it was of the view that an agenda that specifically addressed urban shortcomings in terms of urban planning, governance and finance was also required. With 63 per cent of the country's population now living in urban areas, it was vital to identify the multiple challenges of urbanization, including insecure tenure, vulnerability to eviction and the inability to claim citizenship. Improved public transport and urban mobility and better access to work and recreational facilities were key priorities, especially since segregation persisted in South Africa's cities, where there were huge concentrations of urban poverty.

29. The number of informal settlements, along with infrastructure backlogs and limited resources, placed further pressure on sustainable settlements budgets. The South African Government had therefore embarked on a strategy for spatial targeting to promote more efficient investment that would lead to more viable and sustainable urban centres.

30. Finally, with a view to improving implementation of the Habitat Agenda, it was important to maintain the focus on addressing the needs of women, youth and vulnerable groups, especially persons with disabilities.

31. **Mr. Rodrigues dos Santos** (Brazil) said that, over the next decades, the bulk of urban expansion

would take place in the developing world. By 2050, an estimated 91.4 per cent of Latin America's population would be living in cities. While cities could be drivers for economic growth, poverty reduction and citizen empowerment, urbanization also entailed problems that would be overcome only through policies that led to sustainable development. Although the world's cities occupied just two per cent of the Earth's surface, they accounted for up to 80 per cent of its energy consumption and 75 per cent of its carbon emissions. Because cities were also home to the highest levels of social and economic inequality, Brazil had adopted urban development policies designed to exploit its potential as a pluralistic democracy, with a strong focus on social and economic inclusion, as well as environmental sustainability.

32. Looking ahead to the post-2015 agenda, his country believed that the sustainable development goals should build on the vision of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Many of the prevailing challenges to sustainability would find an adequate and effective response only at the city level and would require the participation of local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders. Brazil therefore fully supported the Working Group's proposal for a stand-alone goal on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

33. The importance of Habitat III, as the first major United Nations conference to take place after the adoption of the new development agenda, could not be overstated. The Conference would be a timely occasion to put cities at the centre of collective efforts to construct a new development paradigm. In that context, the draft resolution to be adopted at the current session should support the preparatory process for Habitat III and should set clear rules of procedure based on prior positive experience, especially Habitat II. It should also define the terms of participation by civil society and government in both the preparatory processes and in the Conference itself. Brazil fully supported Ecuador's offer to host Habitat III in Quito.

34. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that sustainable development should be one of the priorities in framing the post-2015 development agenda, which should address the specific issues of cities concerning access for the most vulnerable, especially persons with disabilities, the elderly and children.

35. Latin America and the Caribbean was the region with the most rapid rise in urban growth. Galloping urbanization had created significant distortions that threatened the sustainability of cities by negatively impacting ecological reserves and agricultural land, as well as exacerbating inequality. The effects of climate change and its repercussions were a further threat to sustainability at the global level, in particular in the developing countries, where informal settlements created vulnerabilities that could be avoided through national planning. It was therefore important to stress the importance of urban resilience to hazards and disasters. His country had created a Ministry for Risk Management that worked closely with local authorities to develop coordinated plans for preventing, addressing and minimizing risks, bearing in mind the particular needs of the most vulnerable groups.

36. Ecuador had expressed its commitment to creating a society geared to the ideal of living well and was taking steps to regulate the use of public space. By offering to host the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), his country hoped to provide an opportunity to chart a new course for sustainable development based on the different realities of all the actors involved. It looked forward to playing a leadership role in taking the new agenda forward.

37. **Ms. Onishi** (Japan) said that her country was pleased to see that the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development had included human settlements among the goals listed in its recent report and believed that Habitat III would be a key vehicle for implementing the new agenda.

38. Japan had supported UN-Habitat since its inception and was host to its regional office in the city of Fukuoka. Her country's national committee for Habitat III had already submitted its draft report, which identified two new challenges: a declining and ageing population, and resilience in the face of natural disasters. In the lead-up to Habitat III, Japan welcomed the opportunity to share its experiences, including that of rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s and of its current efforts to address new challenges, with other countries, in particular those in the Asia-Pacific region, where urbanization was widespread.

39. Her delegation hoped that Habitat III, and the preparatory process for it, would be exemplary in terms of full accountability, efficiency, inclusivity and cost control.

40. **Mr. Benamadi** (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the process to define a new urban agenda that addressed legal gaps, inadequate urban planning, energy insufficiency, the impact of climate change, inequality and social exclusion, as well as the need for decent jobs for all. Algeria was experiencing a period of rapid urbanization that could be seen as a response to the Government's efforts to expand housing and facilities across the country. More than 2 million new dwellings had been built between 2008 and 2013, reducing the occupancy rate to 4.6 per dwelling, in line with international norms.

41. Despite that advance, Algeria's cities continued to face challenges in terms of sustainability, adjustment, attractiveness, competitiveness and territorial equity. Good governance of urban spaces required the establishment of an urban management policy and a cohesive strategy for the construction of new cities and urban hubs. Echoing other speakers, he expressed support for the proposal by the Open Working Group of a stand-alone goal on cities and human settlements that would make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

42. With respect to reform of the governance of UN-Habitat, Algeria endorsed the proposed principle of universality, as it would enhance representation and improve democratic management.

43. **Mr. Zdorov** (Belarus) said it was vital to ensure that issues related to urbanization — including transportation, infrastructure, utilities and environmentally-friendly energy sources — were covered in discussions of the future development agenda. The role and expertise of UN-Habitat were increasingly crucial in assisting Member States. His delegation called on UN-Habitat to broaden the geographical reach of its work, including in Eastern Europe. In that context it was pertinent to refer to UN-Habitat's 2013 report on the status of European cities in transition. Although there had been advances in both Central European and East European cities, serious challenges remained, especially with respect to environmental issues.

44. His delegation believed that all Member States should benefit from the work of UN-Habitat, including middle-income countries such as Belarus, which needed technical assistance to adopt best practices in the areas of city planning and public services. UN-Habitat should draw on the experience of other funds and programmes of the United Nations

development system in order to implement measures aimed at creating favourable conditions to attract funding for core and earmarked programme activities.

45. Belarus was actively participating in the preparatory process for Habitat III. Because of the large number of dense cities in the region, a Habitat centre had been established in Minsk and was helping to prepare separate national reports as well as a consolidated regional report covering the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). His country hoped to see closer cooperation between UN-Habitat and the CIS Executive Committee, which in turn would lead to an enhanced coordination of efforts in the sphere of sustainable urban planning in the region.

46. **Mr. Narang** (India) said that, while urbanization could be a transformational force for sustainable development, discussions on urban development needed to take into account all types of human settlement, in recognition of the organic linkage between cities and their surrounding ecosystems, in particular semi-urban and rural areas. A strong and proactive rural development strategy was therefore vital to address the challenges posed by urbanization.

47. While much attention was being focused on rapid urbanization in Asia and Africa, it was important to keep in mind that the developed world, along with Latin America and the Caribbean, was already 80 per cent urban. Cities therefore held the key to improving the overall living standards of all countries, irrespective of their development level. However, different approaches would be required in the light of different circumstances. Developing countries needed to provide their urban citizens with affordable access to improved and adequate public services and job opportunities in a manner that minimized stress on the environment. Developed countries needed to set an example by lowering the ecological footprint of their cities through the efficient use of energy, water and other resources, the renovation of infrastructure and the retrofitting of buildings.

48. While cities accounted for only one third of India's population, urban areas generated more than two thirds of the country's domestic national product and accounted for 90 per cent of government revenue. It was therefore vital for policy and investment in urban development to generate results in several areas, including housing, basic infrastructure, sanitation, education, sustainable production and consumption,

employment and transportation. To that end, India had launched an initiative to build 100 so-called smart cities, at a cost of \$1.2 billion, where inhabitants would be happier, healthier and wealthier and would rely on information technology to improve efficiency. It was also vital to ensure that the environmental impact of cities could be sustainably managed. Inasmuch as two thirds of the cities that would exist by 2030 had yet to be built, a new energy conservation building code had been mandated and had already been adopted by seven Indian states. New guidelines had also been introduced for use in multi-storey residential buildings, which would account for the bulk of future energy consumption.

49. Enhanced financial and technical assistance on the part of the international community, including technology transfer, was essential to ensure that the human-settlements-related development goals, in particular in the areas of poverty eradication and infrastructure, would be achieved under the post-2015 development agenda.

50. *Ms. Francis (Bahamas), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

51. **Mr. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country had embraced its rapid population growth over the past two decades and was known for its implementation of modern urban planning in the heart of the Middle East. It was in the process of building Masdar City, which would be a model of sustainable urban living, and its capital Dubai was already an intelligently planned city that had become a hub for global transportation and trade. Its sustainability programme, designed specifically for the desert environment of the Middle East, had produced innovations that could be applied in many parts of the world. As it continued to implement initiatives growing out of the Habitat Agenda that had emerged from Habitat II, his country looked forward to playing an active role in the preparations for Habitat III and contributing to the formulation of a new urban agenda.

52. **Mr. Sylla** (Senegal) said that the vast imbalance in the spatial distribution of populations and human settlements in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, along with rapid demographic growth, had led to accelerating and often poorly managed urbanization. Galloping urbanization was generally characterized by spontaneous habitats that fuelled runaway real estate speculation, led to inadequate infrastructure and basic

social services, and contributed to continuing deterioration in the quality of urban life.

53. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development had highlighted the special importance of cities in sustainable development. His Government believed that it was therefore important to introduce good management policies and well-designed urban planning methods. To that end, it had launched a national social and economic development strategy with a view to laying the foundations for sustainable economic growth. The programme laid emphasis on the devolution of public policy, whereby national and sectoral approaches could be adapted to local differences and territorial priorities. It also encouraged a more balanced urban architecture and linkage to the promotion of secondary hubs.

54. Despite some heartening results, there were real constraints on further progress, and a realignment of interventions was called for. New priority needed to be given to the design of planning instruments that took into account disaster-risk prevention and adaptation to climate change; the promotion of urban resilience; the allocation of financial resources to infrastructure and public services; and the implementation of viable, accessible transportation systems.

55. Senegal urged Member States to open the preparatory process for Habitat III to all stakeholders, including local authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Looking ahead to the post-2015 development agenda, Senegal welcomed the inclusion of a goal that addressed urbanization-related issues among the sustainable development goals.

56. **Mr. Al-Noaimi** (Bahrain) said that eliminating discrepancies in the quality of urban life between and within nations would reduce political threats to international security and stability. Programmes and mechanisms were required that would transform population growth in heavily urban countries from a threat to development to a source of strength. The most recent World Habitat Day, held in October 2014 with the theme of “Voices from slums”, had provided reminders of the moral imperative to provide the poorest people in the poorest countries with a decent life.

57. His country had made substantial progress in improving the quality of urban life through sound urban planning and numerous housing, health, education, communications and infrastructure projects. Urban development proceeded on the basis of a

comprehensive vision that included partnerships between government and the private sector. Bahrain looked forward to taking part in Habitat III.

58. **Ms. Jong** (Singapore) said that it was important to move on from fragmented ideas about sustainable urbanization to a more holistic vision of cities and human settlements that were inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

59. Singapore had come a long way since the 1960s, when it had been faced with a housing crisis and a lack of natural resources. It was now a thriving, modern and green city-State. However, that transformation had not come about by chance. With a territory of just 714 square kilometres, Singapore had adopted a long-term approach to land use that looked as far as 50 years into the future. The sustainable Singapore blueprint set out targets and initiatives to improve resource efficiency and enhance Singapore’s urban environment. The Government was also funding research on cost-effective ways to create new spaces and optimize the use of existing ones while maintaining liveability. Over the next decade, the country would rejuvenate existing towns, build new ones and open up new growth areas.

60. In addition, the Singapore Centre for Liveable Cities had developed a framework designed to draw on active inter-agency cooperation, systemic innovation, an active citizenry and community and market engagement. As a high-density country, Singapore hoped that its liveability framework would be a useful reference for other cities facing exponential population growth, especially in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

61. Internationally, Singapore was working to promote cooperation in sustainable urban development. Among other endeavours, she mentioned the joint Sino-Singapore eco-city project in Tianjin, Singapore’s role as co-chair with Sweden of the Group of Friends for Sustainable Cities, and next year’s sixth World Cities Summit Mayors Forum, to be held in New York under the auspices of the Centre for Liveable Cities and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore.

62. **Ms. Bunge** (Argentina) said that urbanization had the potential to improve living standards worldwide and emphasized that it was vital for States to play a proactive, cross-cutting role to ensure universal access to the opportunities cities represented. It was particularly important to implement public policies and strategies that promoted social inclusion and the eradication of poverty and to incorporate a gender

perspective into policies for sustainable housing development.

63. Thanks to the renewed recognition of the importance of a proactive State, the quality of life in the majority of Latin American countries had improved over the past decade. At the national level, between 2000 and 2010, Argentina's neediest population had declined from 14 to 9 per cent, while the country had built more than 2,200 hospitals, expanding health coverage from 52 to 62 per cent of the population. During the same period, the Government had upgraded substandard housing for more than one million people and had reduced critical overcrowding.

64. Despite the progress made, numerous challenges to sustainable urban housing and development remained in both the region and Argentina. It was important to view human settlements as an integrated and cohesive system rather than a set of separate entities and to democratize access to city land use in such a way that access to urban housing was not wholly governed by market forces. At the same time, investment in connectivity infrastructure was essential in order to more equitably distribute decision-making in that area. It was also important to replace local hegemony in land-use policies with a regional and national planning vision that took local needs into account and looked to localities for implementation. The right of persons born in rural areas to remain where they were born should be ensured. Small and peripheral settlements deserved State protection above and beyond the market value of their output and without regard to size.

65. Argentina's progress in social development and urban-land-use planning was proof of its commitment to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements as part of the lead-up to Habitat III. Her delegation wished to extend its strong support to Ecuador for offering to host that Conference in 2016.

66. **Mr. Lu Yuhui** (China) said that sustainable development was fundamental to the solution of human settlement problems. Economic development and poverty eradication were the basic conditions that needed to be met. It was also important to narrow the gap between rich and poor. Economic development should be coordinated with population growth, productivity, resource development and protection of the environment.

67. The interdependence between urban and rural development should be recognized and the gap between them narrowed. With a view to promoting general prosperity, it was vital to properly manage the flow of the rural population into the cities, speed up changes to the mechanisms for integrated urban-rural development and ensure integrated urban-rural planning and public services for sustainable and inclusive urbanization.

68. The international donor community, especially the developed countries, should summon up the political determination and goodwill to provide developing countries with an enabling external environment for economic and social development. Developed countries should honour their commitments to open up their markets and provide resources, technology, personnel and debt relief to developing countries. It was also important to view the human-settlements-development strategies of developing countries in the light of their national situations, capacities and conditions.

69. China was at a critical stage of the urbanization process and was developing a new urbanization framework that was in keeping with its cultural tradition. It stood ready to support international initiatives, especially those aimed at advancing the sustainable development goals of the post-2015 agenda. In 2013, at China's suggestion, the General Assembly had decided to designate 31 October as World Cities Day, thereby drawing increased global attention to the promotion of a sustainable urbanization process.

70. **Mr. Mugodo** (Kenya) said it was vital that the sustainable development of cities and human settlements should be an integral part of the universal development agenda. By 2030, some 5 billion people would be living in urban areas, 95 per cent of them in developing countries. The same trend would prevail in Kenya, where the urban population, currently 32 per cent of the total, was expected to grow as the country approached middle-income status. While urban centres held the lion's share of the financial, intellectual and technological capital of many countries and accounted for the bulk of their gross domestic product, the full potential of urbanization continued to be undermined by, inter alia, weak urban planning, poor urban management and a land-regulation crisis.

71. As the first major conference to be held in the post-2015 era, Habitat III would provide a defining opportunity to establish new mechanisms for sustainable urbanization at the global level. The Conference would also expand the canvas of the development agenda by incorporating its commitments to improving the quality of human settlements for both urban and rural dwellers. Based on guidance from UN-Habitat, Kenya had already established a broad-based national organizing committee for Habitat III. The Government was providing incentives to involve the private sector in drafting its country report as well as in forming partnerships to promote the creation of affordable housing and support appropriate building technologies to address supply-side constraints. Kenya looked forward to hosting the second session of the Preparatory Committee, at which various sub-issues would be addressed.

72. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that, with more than half of the world's population currently living in cities, the progressive urbanization of the planet was having a transformative effect on natural ecosystems. In turn, as cities increasingly became the locus for a majority of people, they affected human life in multiple ways. The centrality of habitat issues to sustainable development was clear from the report of the Open Working Group, whose Goal 11 stressed the importance of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

73. The lack of sufficient and adequate housing in El Salvador was aggravated by the vulnerability of its inhabitants to natural disasters, the effects of global climate change, and persistent violence and insecurity, all of which strongly impacted the country's housing situation. The frequency of natural disasters — earthquakes, landslides, hurricanes, floods — had increased over the past decade, causing damage to infrastructure and the housing stock totalling millions of dollars. Just the previous day, the country had experienced an earthquake that measured 5.7 on the Richter scale.

74. Looking ahead to Habitat III, his country's management group for housing and human settlements had developed a plan to address issues in six main areas: housing; access to land, basic services, public spaces and equipment; financing; technological competitiveness; social cohesion; and the institutional system and the legal framework. El Salvador believed that only a unified public housing and human settlements policy, with cooperation between the public

and private sectors, could lead to the planning and construction of sustainable, resilient cities. It was vital to incorporate human rights, gender awareness and an appropriate focus on land use, risk management and social cohesion in order to create a truly national system of sustainable housing and human settlements.

75. He welcomed Ecuador's offer to host Habitat III in 2016. As the first major United Nations conference following the definition of the sustainable development goals, his Government was expecting Habitat III to lead to an agreement that would consolidate lessons learned from prior programmes, build on best practices for addressing critical shortages of housing and land, mobilize the necessary resources for specialized technical assistance in sustainable housing, including strategies to prevent the formation of slums, and assist national and local Governments in meeting the newer challenges of climate change, urban insecurity and crime.

76. **Ms. Plokhova** (Russian Federation) said that adequate and precise measures in the post-2015 development agenda were called for in the light of the rapid growth of cities and urban populations. Currently, 74 per cent of the population in the Russian Federation lived in cities. While her country was working to improve the housing and overall well-being of city dwellers, its legislation concerning urbanization was in line with international norms and the Millennium Development Goals.

77. Her delegation welcomed the first joint meeting between the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee on issues of sustainable urbanization and Habitat III. The Russian Federation was already preparing its contribution to the Conference and would submit its national report in December. The Moscow office of UN-Habitat was developing a regional project for Habitat III on behalf of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In addition, her country planned to participate in the preparatory process and to take an active part in developing the outcome document for the Conference.

78. **Ms. Klein Solomon** (International Organization of Migration) said that the relationship between urbanization and migration was not only close but in many ways inseparable. Many aspects besides rural to urban migration deserved consideration.

79. Migrants from abroad tended to settle in cities, posing a challenge for the delivery of essential services

and the preservation of social cohesion and stability in increasingly diverse societies, where migrants were often a minority. Whether external or internal, migrants often had to settle in hazard-prone, poorly planned areas with little access to basic services. When disasters struck, they were among the worst affected. Yet migration could also mitigate the impact of disasters if it was incorporated into urban-development policies and disaster-reduction strategies, since it could expedite recovery after disasters and provide an essential avenue to safety for populations at risk.

80. Integrating migration issues into the discussions for a post-2015 agenda on urbanization was a priority for her organization.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.