



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. PETER THOMSON, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON 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), AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 28 October 2013)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item focusing on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the UN-Habitat. I would also like to thank the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for presenting the report of the Governing Council of its 24th session.

Mr. Chairman,

3. A demographic revolution is moving hunger and poverty problems in developing countries from rural to urban areas. Today, about 50% of the global population lives in cities. The process of urbanization remains rapid especially in Africa and Asia. As a result, sustainable urban development has become one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century. Therefore due consideration should be given to sustainable cities in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.
 4. At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders recognised the importance of sustainable cities and sustainable urbanisation. They reaffirmed that cities, if well planned and developed, can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. In this regard, the Group of 77 holds the view that a holistic approach is required to urban development and human settlements. This approach should provide for affordable housing, social services and infrastructure and be one that prioritises slum upgrading and urban regeneration mobility.
 5. In recognition of the need to promote sustainable cities and sustainable urbanisation, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat made a decision this year to recommend to the General Assembly that, beginning in 2014, the 31st October each year be designated as World Cities Day. The Group of 77 fully supports this recommendation and believes that the designation of such a day will create the necessary public awareness worldwide on this emerging global challenge.
- Mr. Chairman,
6. While significant progress has been made in implementing the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlement and the Habitat Agenda, the Group expresses deep concern on the continuing increase in the number of urban slum dwellers in the world, the negative impact of environmental degradation on human settlement and the increasing vulnerability of urban settlers to natural and human-made disasters.

7. The Group calls for continued financial support to UN-Habitat through the UN regular budget and increased voluntary contributions to supplement its funding needs. It is critically important to have adequate and predictable funding to ensure UN-Habitat's effectiveness in supporting national policies, strategies and plans for attaining the goals of the Habitat Agenda, the MDG targets and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation relevant to human settlement, as well as relevant commitments contained in the Rio+20 outcome document.

8. The Group further calls on the UN system organisations to support the Habitat preparation process at the country level, including the establishment or strengthening of national habitat committees and the preparation of Habitat III reports. We also urge international and bilateral donors, including the private sector, financial institutions and foundations, to support the national, regional and global preparations for the Habitat III conference through generous contributions to the Habitat III trust fund.

9. Lastly, the Group of 77 and China thanks the Government of Ecuador for its offer to hold Habitat III in Quito, and welcomes this offer. We are proud to have this Conference hosted by a Member of our Group.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.