



**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, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE 7TH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON "SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT" (New York, 6 January 2014)**

Co-Chairs,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. At the outset, allow me to use this opportunity at the beginning of the new year to wish everyone a fruitful 2014. The year ahead will be a challenging one in the context of formulating the SDGs. It is our sincere hope that 2014 will mark a major milestone in our collective quest for a set of global and universally applicable sustainable development goals that aim at eradicating poverty and advancing sustainable development. The Group is committed to work collaboratively and cooperatively with partners towards this noble objective.
3. The Group wishes to thank you, co-chair, for convening this seventh session of the Open Working Group meeting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We appreciate the issue briefs prepared by the Technical Support Team and would like to thank the keynote speakers, Dr. Joan Clos and Ms. Adriana de Almeida Lobo, for their interesting presentations and thought provoking remarks. We also acknowledge the important work of UN-Habitat, including its assistance to members in implementing the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlement and the Habitat Agenda. This statement focuses on the first cluster of issues: "sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport".

Co-Chairs,

4. Sustainable cities and human settlement will be a major development challenge over the next several decades. As we have heard today, humanity is now half urban, with projections that some 70 per cent of the world's population will live in cities by 2050, with rural-urban drift occurring largely in developing countries especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the bulk of extreme poverty is concentrated. The grim reality of approximately one billion people living in urban slums highlights the gravity of the challenges. Poor people living in slum houses in unhealthy environments, which co-exist with modern high-rise buildings in many developing countries, is a stark contrast that depicts poverty and inequality - two important issues that should have priority in the post-2015 development agenda.
5. Urbanisation in developing countries has serious implications for their urban development challenges. Inequalities occur in many areas but are frequently consolidated in the spatial trap of slums. Slum dwellers living in poor housing conditions, away from basic services and jobs face economic, social and physical exclusion. The lack of access to education, health, adequate food, employment opportunities and personal security often further entrenches slum dwellers in poverty. With the overarching objective of poverty eradication in the post-2015 development agenda, the Group encourages Governments and UN-Habitat agenda partners to use planned city extension methodologies to guide the sustainable development of cities experiencing rapid urban growth, in order to prevent slum proliferation, enhance access to basic urban services, support inclusive

housing, enhance job opportunities and create a safe and healthy living environment for all city dwellers.

Co-Chairs,

6. At the 2012 Rio+20 Summit, our political leaders recognised the importance of sustainable cities and sustainable development as essential to poverty eradication and moving to a sustainable future. We hold the view that cities, if well-planned and developed through a holistic approach, integrating proper planning and management, can promote all the three dimensions of sustainable development resulting in the creation of sustainable cities and urbanisation.

7. Cities are, as we know, the primary engines of economic activity, growth, development, research and innovation. With urban areas set to expand and be built by 60 per cent before 2030, cities also represent unparalleled opportunities to transform the social and economic fabric of nations. However, if current trends continue with the 'business as usual' approach where many local governments and cities are in general not well equipped, are under-resourced and disempowered to address emerging urban challenges, many countries do not stand to reap the benefits of sustainable urban development. How the SDGs address the multi-dimensional challenges of urban development in order to improve the lives of slum dwellers, provide access to basic services, including infrastructure services, how they protect local and regional ecosystems, and strengthen urban resilience and adaptation is all of paramount importance to the post-2015 development agenda.

8. The Group believes that policies and development efforts targeted at poverty eradication must be responsive to the challenges as well as opportunities of sustainable development at both international and national levels. In the context of sustainable cities and urbanisation, it is important that all United Nations system organisations, including the international community, financial institutions, UN-Habitat agenda partners and all relevant stakeholders play a constructive role in assisting developing countries to address the multiple challenges facing cities. It is imperative that adequate resources are mobilised and allocated for the attainment of development goals such as those highlighted in the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation relevant to human settlements, as well as relevant commitments contained in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled 'the future we want'.

9. Sustainable urban development and human settlement require transformative policies at multiple levels of governance. It requires a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approach that engages all relevant stakeholders. In this regard, we call for new modalities of interaction between nations at the international level, as well as between central and local governments at the national level, in order to fulfil their respective roles as governmental stakeholders in global efforts on sustainability. Other non-state actors such as the private sector, civil society, foundations, academia, regional and global networks of cities also play important complementary roles in ensuring the sustainable development of cities which are responsive to the needs of their citizens. At the local level, city planners should tackle urban development challenges through inclusive policies that favour people-centred objectives and participatory decision-making that include the disadvantaged and marginalised members of society.

Co-Chairs,

10. As cities remain large-scale consumers of water, energy and natural and processed products as well as significant generators of greenhouse gas emission and waste, the future sustainability of

cities in a world of resource scarcity demand our urgent attention and appropriate responses. The greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are growing faster than any other sector and are estimated to increase from one quarter today to one-third of all energy-related carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. Outdoor air pollution, with the transport sector as a major contributor, is estimated to result in more than 3.2 million premature deaths annually. Many cities in all regions of the world have serious traffic congestions resulting in major impacts on economic development and human mobility. All these challenges call for our serious actions to implement paragraph 133 of the Johannesburg Plan of Action for the development of 'sustainable transport systems, including energy efficient multi-modal transport systems, notably public mass transportation systems, clean fuels and vehicles, as well as improved transportation systems in rural areas'.

11. To this end, transport infrastructure investments require a long time horizon and international efforts must support developing countries to achieve this objective. Transport infrastructure projects should not only focus on highways but include dedicated bus lanes for rapid transit systems, and integrate safe walking and cycling facilities when building or upgrading urban roads. A sustainable society and a healthier environment is possible if we shift towards a more sustainable transport path and move away from our dependence on individual car use to greater utilisation of public transport and other environmental-friendly modes of transport.

12. Lastly, the Group of 77 and China is proud to play an instrumental role in the recent United Nations' decision to proclaim 31 October of every year, beginning in 2014, as World Cities Day. We are convinced that the proclamation of the World Cities Day and its subsequent observance and celebration will raise global awareness on the importance of sustainable cities and human settlement, as well as the need for sustainable transport. We look forward to the outputs of the World Urban Forum to be held in Medellin, Colombia in April 2014. We also welcome the offer by the Government of Ecuador to host the UN-Habitat III conference in Quito in 2016.

I thank you, Co-Chair!