



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. SACHA LLORENTI, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE FIRST INTEGRATION SEGMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ON SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION (New York, 28 May 2014)

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for convening this meeting on the first Integration Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on "Sustainable Urbanization", that will facilitate discussions on how urbanization can promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and address the environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive roles of cities.

The outcome of our discussions over these three days will be an important input to the the High-Level Segment of the Council and the High-Level Political Forum, and will also reinforce the Council's mandate to promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

As we look towards a transformative global development agenda beyond 2015, it is important to reflect on the fact 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, seriously compounding their urban development challenges. 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 an unhealthy environment, 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.

Our political leaders have reaffirmed at the 2012 Rio+20 Summit that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge and the need to accord the highest priority to poverty eradication within the United Nations development agenda, addressing the root causes and challenges of poverty through integrated, coordinated and coherent strategies at all levels. World leaders also recognized that if they are well planned and developed, including through integrated planning and management approaches, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. Rio+20 outcome document also provides a holistic template to pursue sustainable urbanization based on the imperatives of provision of affordable housing and infrastructure and focus on slum upgrading and urban regeneration.

The Group of 77 and China holds the view that cities, if planned and developed through a holistic approach, one that integrates proper planning and management, can promote all the three dimensions of sustainable development resulting in the creation of sustainable cities and urbanisation. 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.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China is of the firm view that policies and development efforts targeted at poverty eradication and provision of affordable housing, public infrastructure and economic opportunities must be at the heart of our efforts towards sustainable urbanization. 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'.

We note that while significant efforts and progress have been made in implementing the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlement and the Habitat Agenda, challenges remain, such as, inter alia, the rapid urbanisation process in large parts of the developing world. The continuing increase in the number of urban slum dwellers and the negative impact of environmental degradation on human settlements remain pressing challenges for urban planners. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China encourages Governments and 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.

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.

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". The proclamation of the World Cities Day and its subsequent observance and celebration will no doubt raise global awareness on the importance of sustainable cities and sustainable urbanisation.

Thank You.