

Plenary Statement  
United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development  
(Habitat III)

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It is a special privilege to be meeting in this beautiful city of Quito. Thank you to the Government of Ecuador and to the local authorities of Pichincha for their leadership, warmth and hospitality. Thank you also to UN HABITAT and the wonderful way in which they have organised the logistics and the substantive outcome 'the New Urban Agenda'.

2015 and 2016 are two significant years in the history of the United Nations and sustainable development. Sendai, Addis, New York, Paris and now Quito are the venues of most significant UN outcomes bound by the common golden thread of the prosperity of our people and the protection of our planet, for those who inhabit our world today and those who will do so tomorrow. It is especially heartening to see the congruence and coherence in both the objectives and the means to achieve these promises over the next fifteen years.

I do not need to make a case today for the importance of the New Urban Agenda which has been done adequately and eloquently by so many speakers. My preoccupation, as the Head of UNITAR, is how we are going to implement the multiple agendas of 2015 and 2016. Our tools at UNITAR focus on public awareness, education and training. Our objective is to build capacity, change mind-sets and bring about visible change, especially at the national and sub-national levels. In pursuing these goals, we train public policy officials, civil society and educators and aim to especially impact those who take decisions and those who make our cities of the future viable, safe, resilient and sustainable. It is no easy task.

The formal adoption of the outcome document is only a small part of the myriad of possibilities in Quito. This week will witness the strengthening of partnerships, the birth of new partnerships, the engagement of all actors with the realisation that the urban agenda is for everyone. It is not the exclusive preserve of only a few officials. It is an enterprise that will need to engage those who live

in cities but also address the rural-urban linkages that are central to the organic growth of cities. Strengthening these linkages in multiple ways is one of the implementation tasks ahead of us.

UNITAR's contribution to the 'cities we want' is multifaceted. Firstly, UNITAR coordinates a network of training centres for local authorities, the "CIFAL Global network", which supports local government officials, building capacities to comprehend, prepare and respond to current and emerging challenges. Through its CIFAL network, UNITAR's training activities reach sub-national and local decision makers, translating the New Urban Agenda into tangible action and visible change at the city level. Our CIFAL centres span the globe. They help in amplifying the training of UNITAR which benefits over 50,000 individuals and institutions every biennium.

UNITAR's Satellite Applications Programme, UNOSAT, also contributes to resilient and sustainable solutions to urban planning. Through satellite imagery and spatial analysis, the Programme is able to inform evidence-based decision making, particularly with respect to reducing vulnerabilities, building resilience, and measuring the impact of conflicts and disasters.

Over recent years, activities have expanded into the fields of human security and human rights, for example for the protection of civilians, for the planning and monitoring of refugee camps, for locating internally displaced persons and for assessing damage to civilian sites during conflict situations. UNOSAT's innovative and science-led approach will continue to lead the way in supporting integrated solutions to urban planning.

Effective urban planning based on satellite data, can maximise the use of natural resources, ensure cost-effective investment in infrastructure, measure environmental degradation, and support the necessary balance between social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic productivity. Satellite and other aerial data is invaluable in city planning, land use management and in understanding the linkages between the urban, the peri-urban and the rural areas.

UNITAR is also working to empower national governments and their partners to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into urban planning, and is supporting the mainstreaming, implementation and review process of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. UNITAR is working closely with the UN family and its Advisory Council on the 2030 Agenda, to develop toolkits

for policy makers, including on Goal 11 to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. We aspire to tailor make our training programmes, with special effort to reach the furthest first, especially the most vulnerable and countries in special situations.

Let me conclude by encouraging all actors here in Quito, government delegates, city and regional leaders, United Nations colleagues and civil society, to engage fully in this historical opportunity, to take the time to build and strengthen new and existing partnerships, and take bold steps towards shaping the future we want for our cities. We all have the common responsibility to guide our development pathways, and work together to ensure concrete actions towards just, resilient and sustainable societies and cities for all.

I thank you for your attention.