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European Union and its Member States
Speaking Points on "Sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport"

delivered by
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Sustainable cities and human settlements

The EU and its Member States acknowledge the opportunities and challenges posed by rapid urbanisation. In 2013, a majority (52%) of the world's population is urban and this proportion is steadily increasing. In this context, we consider sustainable cities as central to poverty eradication and sustainable development. Sustainable cities can be the hub for decent employment opportunities and for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

However, in order to capitalise on the benefits of urban growth, major and deep-rooted measures need to be taken. Otherwise, urban infrastructure and services will fall tragically short of what is necessary to sustain a decent life for all, as construction and maintenance costs in a scattered urban structure are considerable and choices made when building urban structures are to a great extent permanent and have a long life span..

We support a **holistic approach** to cities that integrates many aspects ranging from poverty reduction to management of a range of natural resources as well as interlinkages and interdependencies with their rural surrounding; this can improve quality of life for citizens and reduce impact on the global environment.

We want to emphasize the following action areas:

➢ Urgent action is needed to avoid soaring levels of poverty and the increase of **slum dwellers** living in deprived housing conditions with lack of basic services like water, sanitation, durable housing, sufficient living area, access to education, energy or security of tenure. Reducing the number of slum dwellers will require key investments in improved infrastructures, notably by local authorities, and also better attention to gender equality and access to reproductive health services.

➢ One of the first natural resources submitted to strong pressures is **land** with the sprawl phenomenon often absorbing agricultural land. At the same time, insufficient urban public space is a major obstacle to urban development. Therefore, sustainable land use should be promoted to avoid both the problem of scarcity of public space and urban sprawl. Compact and mixed land use, combined with improved access to housing and mobility, encourages social diversity and brings employment opportunities closer to all, especially to the youth, women and vulnerable.

➢ **Air pollution** in cities contributes to the increasing rate of heart and respiratory disease which calls for processes to manage and improve air quality.

➤ Inadequate **waste management** imposes serious negative environmental impacts within the city and the wider region. Also, health risks for urban residents increase when waste is not collected regularly. Considerable benefits can be obtained when improving waste management, managing wastes as resource, reducing waste generation and developing re-use and recycling.

➤ **Physical security and safety**: Between 2002 and 2007, 60% of urban residents reported being victims of crime with women and the young population facing particular risks, especially for slum dwellers and requiring urgent action.

➤ Action is needed to increase **urban resilience** to disasters, also caused by climatic variability. In many cities infrastructure and energy systems, buildings, telecommunication networks, transport systems as well as other resource supply are highly vulnerable to disasters. Beyond promoting better building codes and more resilient infrastructure; urban disaster risk reduction must also put emphasis on institutions and emergency services including police, fire forces, planning and building inspection departments.

➤ As part of the decentralization process underway in many countries, the political role of **local authorities**, legally competent and primary managers of urban development, has to be strengthened. Urban planning needs to be undertaken with the needs of citizens as a central priority, hence **citizens' voices** need to be heard through open and transparent decision making processes.

These actions can only be achieved through pursuing an **integrated approach to urban planning and governance** that encourages a safe and healthy living environment and that takes into account the expected increase in urban population. In this context, we consider sustainable urban development as an important element of the post-2015 development agenda.

Sustainable transport

We also consider **sustainable transport** as crucial for poverty eradication and sustainable development in urban and rural areas. In this regard, we want to emphasize that:

- Access to sustainable transport is central for **ensuring a set of basic living standards** as it contributes to food security (notably by ensuring that agricultural products are moved to markets), education and health.

- The transport sector plays an important role for **inclusive economic growth** as it offers a large share of job opportunities. Also, a well-developed transport infrastructure is central for regional integration, in particular for improving access for landlocked countries to international markets.

- Public transport must be affordable, safe and secure, especially for women who often face specific threats and violence. The smooth running of journey to work or school is an important factor affecting quality of life.

- There is a need to work towards an **environmentally friendly transport system.** One quarter of energy related greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to the transport sector thus contributing to global warming and having a direct impact on human wellbeing such as through high levels of air pollution Especially in urban regions, the cohesion of urban structures, the efficiency of the transport system, the operating conditions for public transport as well as walking and cycling should be promoted to reduce dependence on individual means of transport and contribute to make cities more pleasant and safer places to live. As cities grow, it is also possible to develop a high standard of transport between them.

Therefore, by doing it "right", transport positively impacts on health, education and safety, fosters green economic growth and limits the growth of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In this regard, it is important that access to sustainable transport is adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.