High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities:

Connecting People, Environment and Technology

Toyota City, Japan, 15-16 January 2015

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Closing remarks, Draft 15 January 2015

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to take the floor at the closing of the High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities: Connecting People, Environment and Technology.

I extend a warm thank you to our hosts, Mayor Ota and the Municipal Government of Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture, for their generous hospitality, and for providing an excellent setting for our discussions during the past two days. I hope we will have more opportunities to meet in Toyota City in the future.

Our discussions have been in-depth, varied and enlightened.

They have illustrated the truly interlinked and cross cutting nature of policy planning and implementation for sustainable cities in the context of overall sustainable development.

The symposium has generated important messages and recommendations which we will gather and further develop into a proposed Toyota Statement.

This document will be intended to support national and local decision-makers and other stakeholders in further developing sustainable cities and urbanization in their country specific contexts. It will complement the Yangzhou Recommendations on Sustainable Cities and Sustainable Urbanization, the outcome of the High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities, held in December 2013 in Yangzhou, China.

We are grateful for you having shared your insights and experiences. I am also grateful for the important contribution of our UN-system partners, with whom we will continue to work closely in our work on sustainable development issues.

Some messages that I take away from our meeting are as follows:

- Sustainable cities are of high priority in defining a post-2015 development agenda. Cities encompass all the SDGs, require financing, promote resource efficiency and productivity, provide job opportunities and drive economic growth. But the risks and challenges are also amplified in the urban context. Concerns for pollution and congestion, vulnerabilities to natural events, concerns for health, public safety to name a few.

- Successful implementation will depend on the local authorities and their capacity to put in place the necessary policy measures in support of the SDGs, adapted to national and local circumstances, and monitor local trends and emerging issues.

- Policies must be people centred, addressing the needs and aspirations of all peoples whether regarding access to participation in public life, opportunities for cultural expression, education, health services, employment, access to and preservation of the natural environment within and surrounding the city system.

- In order for cities to be adaptable and dynamic they must have relevant systems in place that support and enable transformative policies whether related to increasing resilience and disaster preparedness, responding to changing demographic trends, seeking large scale transition to renewable energy systems or other such major goals.

- Finance and transfer of knowledge to enable a sustainable city transformation remain key challenges for developing countries in particular. This is an area which deserves more attention as we move forward.

- New governance structures and ways of operating such as meaningful engagement of citizens, participation of the private sector and partnership with multiple stakeholders are needed to handle the growing role of cities in the global economy, and the accompanying challenges related to infrastructure development, social protection schemes and services, environmental regulations among others.

- Technological innovation is successful and can play an important role for sustainable cities, if made widely accessible, affordable and socially beneficiary. This is an area which requires supportive and enabling policy framework, close collaboration with academia, the scientific community and the private sector. In this regard we need to explicitly consider the ICT literacy of the population, in particular the elderly.

- We heard that it becomes less and less meaningful to consider rural and urban areas as distinctly separate rather both form parts of the "urban system". We need to seek out opportunities for integration, for improving connectedness and interlinked solutions.

- That we have much in common - are more alike than different. While our gathering here represents a wide ranging type of cities and urbanization spheres, from the Smart cities on Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia, to the interesting approaches to urban mobility in Bogota, Colombia, to the planning responses to urban challenges in Senegal and Sudan. We share many experiences and therefore also possible solutions and best practices from which we can benefit moving forward.

There are many more messages from our discussions and we shall do our best to capture them with the help of our eloquent session moderators. We will share a consolidated draft with you

and invite you to provide any last inputs, bearing in mind that this is not a negotiation document, but rather a compilation of messages and recommendations.

When finalized, we will circulate it to you all, have it on our website (sustainabledevelopment.un.org) and of course, in other fora.

I invite you to make the best possible use of this document, and continue to share your expertise so that we may all continue to learn.

It is my hope that the Symposium has provided impetus for continued collaboration governments at all level, city planners, sustainable development practitioners, the private sector, our young people, and other stakeholders.

I am deeply thankful and wish you safe travels back home.