



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States

By

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**23rd session of UN-HABITAT Governing Council,
Nairobi (11-15 April 2011)**

**United Nations
Nairobi**

11 April 2011

Mr. President, Distinguished Ministers and delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
2. Let me first congratulate you, Hon. Vincent Karega, Minister for Infrastructure of Rwanda, on your election as President of this session.
3. The first decade of the 21st century brought crucial changes in global terms, owing to the multiple financial, economic, food and energy crisis and the effects of climate change as well as overwhelming natural disasters. These difficulties draw attention to the importance of strengthening the sustainability aspects of urban development more than ever before. We reaffirm to consider cities the engines of innovative change in the long term development and welfare of the states. We emphasize the need to strengthen the interrelation of cities with their surroundings, and to create a proper balance of the economic, environmental and social aspects, also taking into account the specific needs of rural and peri-urban areas. Safety has also become a basic expectation in urban and rural areas. We believe that in order to deal with these challenges, it is necessary to sustain the development of our cities in social, ecological and economical terms. This requires cooperation at all levels, and underlines the significance of multi-level governance.
4. The past ten years have seen an endeavour to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals. This decade has without doubt brought achievements in many areas of the Millennium Declaration, which we full heartedly welcome and draw further inspiration from. The efforts in meeting MDG 7 with regard to a targeted reduction in the number of slum dwellers have brought notable achievement. Cities and local governments have often proven to be important actors in dealing with various development-related targets – education, gender equality, health, water and sanitation – also defined in the MDG agenda. On the other hand however, there are still many developing countries which have shown limited progress in these areas. The High Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals last September shed light on the fact that some regions are heavily

lagging behind with regard to several of the MDG targets. There is still much to do in order to eliminate extreme poverty, deprivation and hunger and meet the MDG targets.

5. In recent times new challenges have emerged, which we feel need focused attention in the coming years. Among them is the issue of demographic change, which shows great disparities worldwide. We see a decreasing and ageing population in Europe, while in several developing countries there is huge demographic growth resulting in many cases in a high ratio of young population. Such demographic pattern, in combination with economic opportunity as the biggest driving factor towards cities, renders demographic processes particularly relevant at city-level. Demographic changes require responsive actions with regard to water and sanitation, access to land, services, education, health care, housing, social inclusion, redefinition of economic basis and the labour-market.

6. Another important global challenge of this century is climate change. According to estimates more than two thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050. The role that cities play in the context of climate change is undeniable. Cities are partly a cause of climate impacts, but cities also provide innovation and solutions in the field of planning, management and appropriate clean technologies. The continuous global climate change affects cities – especially those in coastal areas – by an increasing number and intensity of storms, heat waves, floods and hurricanes. The poor are the most affected and least able to cope with the impacts. Thus, city-level responses for climate change are fundamental. Adaptation to climate change is of the essence in rural and urban contexts, where the consequences of climate change materialize in the form of increased vulnerability for their inhabitants. Decision makers at local and national level are therefore encouraged to mainstream adaptation- and mitigation-strategies into governance processes and to develop integrated solutions. As no unified policy model or standard solution exists, the emphasis should be on strengthening capacities, the dissemination of knowledge on planning, the exchange of experiences and best practices, and technical assistance at the relevant local, regional and national level.

7. Even though the geographic differences are evident, challenges of rapid urban growth and the consequent formation of slums is a common problem of developed and developing countries alike. Europe has to deal appropriately with the issues of migration and the demographic change, tackle various forms of exclusion and marginalization as well as fight the increase in urban poverty. In the developing countries a major challenge is to decrease the number of slum dwellers and to improve the conditions for those living in slums. We welcome to keep this issue on the agenda.
8. The European Union and its Member States have always been open to collaboration on issues related to human settlements' development. We appreciate that the program of the twenty third session of the Governing Council aims at relevant and urgent issues and that EU Member States have the opportunity to share experience as well as to exchange ideas on how to address such global challenges.
9. The European Union and its Member States continue to support UN-HABITAT efforts in dealing with challenges affecting the urban and rural settlements, particularly through well structured, clear and transparent institutional frameworks of cooperation. This support has been reassured at the Consolidated Urban Dialogue in Brussels in January 2011, where representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission and other EU bodies as well as many representatives from EU member states have expressed their will to foster partnerships for the promotion of integrated sustainable urban development. Still, there is a need for reconsideration and reassessment of the internal institutional and coordinating structure of the UN-HABITAT activities regarding human settlements to reach more coordinated balanced network of liaison in the different regions and countries.
10. The EU has recently launched a Green Book on „EU development policy in support of inclusive growth and sustainable development” which strongly highlights the importance of good governance, which significantly enhances the effectiveness of development assistance. Emphasis is given to transparency, accountability, improved monitoring and reporting mechanisms. The EU finds it encouraging that the Executive Director has expressed his readiness for continued reform of the organization. The EU wishes to underline the importance of continued efforts to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability. In order for UN-Habitat to play a significant role in accordance with its

mandate, it is pivotal for the organization to prioritize and to engage foremost in areas where it has a comparative advantage. An improvement in efficiency may require scaling down or terminating activities of lower priority.

11. The EU also acknowledges the importance of disaster risk reduction, preparedness, prevention and mitigation, underlining the responsibility of local governments to take the necessary initiative and contribution in this process and offering to share the EU experience on this topic especially with regard to the presently ongoing discussions on Disaster Risk Reduction.

12. To conclude, allow me to express, that the European Union appreciates the preparatory work on the Governing Council session by Executive Director Dr Joan Clos and his team. We also wish to thank the Committee of Permanent Representatives for all the hard work they have done, which greatly contributed to the successful preparation of this event. Finally, allow me to thank on behalf of the European Union and its Member States the Government and the people of the Republic of Kenya for their kind hospitality.
