

**The Future of Cities: An Integrated Approach to Urban Problems**  
**Conference Room 2, United Nations Headquarters, New York**  
**10 February 2014 , 3.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.**

***Draft Keynote Speech of Dr. Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of Istanbul President of United Cities and Local Governments, representing the Global Taskforce for 2015 towards Habitat III.***

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Let me first thank you, on behalf of local leaders gathered in United Cities and Local Governments as well as the Global Taskforce for the opportunity given today to share with you our vision of the future of cities, that we like to tackle from the perspective of the opportunities offered by the increasing urbanization of the world.

Fellow mayors around the world have entrusted me to bring to you today their commitment to address the responsibility for meeting development targets of the new development agenda. **An agenda they expect to be universal and people centered** as well as realistic, achievable and mindful of the need of future generations.

We also would like to recall the audience that no urban sustainability will be reached without an integrated approach of all the international processes. In particular the agendas of Climate, Finance and Development cannot be seen as different, but as part of the same puzzle and should all feed into the future urban agenda.

**Democratic, peaceful and sustainable societies will need to be cemented on sound, accountable and capable local and territorial institutions that work to bridge inequalities and have the collective interest of all at heart while paying special attention to those that need it most.**

Allow me to begin by underlining that despite the growing awareness on the role of urban centers as the home for the majority of the world population in the coming years, there is insufficient acknowledgement of the transformative impact of the urbanization phenomenon in the agenda we have been discussing over the past year.

I have tirelessly repeated in the fruitful debates of the High Level Panel that **the risks of badly managed urbanization are underestimated.**

City management is a complex undertaking of institutional development and governance, planning, partnerships and consultations with the myriad stakeholders within cities, and considerable amounts of financing. When this management and financing is found wanting, the many benefits of cities are never fulfilled.

**Territorial governments: key partners for the future of cities**

During the preparation and outcomes of Habitat II, local governments were recognized as a key partner of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Habitat II was also an important step forward in recognizing the

relevance of the networks of local authorities and contributing towards greater collaboration among them.

Presently, the members of the Global Taskforce confirm their belief that a new, broad partnership must be erected, based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, mutual respect and mutual benefit. Mindful of the challenges that many parts of the world are facing with increased violence, in particular in the Middle East, we would like to call for far-reaching agreements based on universal commitments.

### **Transformative potential of urbanization**

The transformative potential of urbanization is being broadly acknowledged. This is also a time when we face unprecedented global challenges such as migration shifts and consumption patterns, which will need to be tackled at territorial level.

We need to strengthen local authorities' capacities to plan and manage city development in a strong partnership with national governments and local stakeholders. In many countries analysis of cities indicates that neither policy frameworks nor infrastructural investments have kept up with urban growth that lessons from city development are being ignored, and that as a result, cities are developing with problems ranging from increasing inequalities, lack of basic infrastructures to a degraded environment.

We need to draw a clear picture of the results, achievements and unfinished issues of the Habitat II Agenda, paying particular attention to the implementation of decentralization processes around the world, the state of access to basic services, the financing of sub-national authorities and infrastructures, and the development of territorial cohesion.

The full involvement of local and regional authorities as policy developers and not simply implementers will enable the creation of an inclusive and sustainable urban development in the future.

## **Key Policy Areas**

### **Territorial cohesion**

We would like to emphasize the need for a territorial approach as being crucial to the New Urban Agenda, and stress how urbanization can contribute to national development. The territorial focus should take into account the rural-urban continuum as well as the important role of peripheral areas, intermediary cities and intermediary levels of governments. Local and Regional Governments will promote efficient and inclusive land-use planning as a mainspring for implementing sustainable urbanization.

### **Local and multi-level governance**

Managing a rapidly urbanizing world will necessitate reinforcing local governance and improving collaboration between the different levels of government (national, regional, local). The promotion of public space policies, strategic urban and regional planning, and acknowledging the opportunities and challenges of metropolization and cohesion among territories will be instrumental. A clear division of responsibilities between the different levels of governance based on

self-government and the principle of subsidiarity will be of great importance to achieving a sound agenda.

### **Citizens at the center of governance**

Strengthening mechanisms to enable the genuine participation of the population in the co-production of public services and urban planning, the evaluation of public policies and decision-making, and in ensuring the accountability of governments at all levels and including e-solutions, will be essential. Increased accountability and innovative formats of governance will be a fundamental change that should be factored into the new urban agenda.

### **Culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development**

Sustainable urban development needs to explicitly acknowledge the role of culture based on a people-centered society which needs to promote heritage, creativity, diversity and the transmission of knowledge.

### **Innovation and local economic and social development**

The agenda will need to support the efforts of cities to develop an enabling environment for economic development, promoting local enterprises and cooperatives as engines of growth, as well as corporate social responsibilities, decent and inclusive job opportunities. It should be mindful of social cohesion addressing wealth concentration and growing urban inequalities, as reflected in the lack of affordable housing and gated communities with inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure.

Furthermore, Local and Regional Governments will need to see their capacities strengthened to be able to better integrate the informal sector's contribution to local development, define and implement local economic policies and design strategies to support local initiatives.

Decentralized cooperation, peer-to-peer learning and municipal international cooperation have been helping to enhance and build the capacity of local governments in the global south and should evolve towards a more structured and systematic approach.

### **Addressing climate change and disaster risk and promoting resilience**

We must move away from the connection between development and higher living standards leading to increased fossil fuel use and environmental degradation. And promote a sustainable development mindful of the earth's capacity.

### **Adequate financing at territorial Level**

As we have extensively explained this morning, there is widespread under-investment in basic services and infrastructures in urban and rural areas and an increasing gap between the responsibilities transferred to local governments and their revenues. National and local governments need to join forces to mobilize domestic resources, and create an enabling environment for long-term investment. The localization of resources is instrumental and must be part of financial engineering and resource managing capabilities to foster the modernization of local administrations.

Finally, me and my peers around the world would like to stress the importance of a **successful, well resourced and significant Habitat III Conference** that will

not only define a new Urban Agenda but also a new role to local and sub-national governments in the Global Development Agenda. And reaffirm our commitment to actively contribute to this process, developing an intensive consultation process among constituency members, which will culminate in the Second Assembly of Local Authorities.