

Statement of the European Union and its Member States
World Urban Forum 11 Katowice, Poland – 27 June 2022
Opening Ceremony

Our collective commitment to the delivery of the New Urban Agenda

- **Sustainable urban development is one of the keys to the future of Europe.** Our cities must be inclusive, low-emission, and they must be resilient – adapting to new challenges and to unprecedented shocks and crisis. In light of the New European Bauhaus initiative, we also believe that cities need to ensure a sense of belonging and the quality of experience for all citizens.
- **So the European Union and its Member States are working closely together** to support sustainable urban development, **in line with the principles** of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. Collaboration is the key to successful development, and we are pleased to participate to this edition of the World Urban Forum.
- **There is a new sense of urgency.** This became clear at the recent High Level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. And we expect the same urgency as we look towards the High Level Political Forum of 2023 and review of SDG 11. We must **accelerate actions and delivery**.
- **In recent years, progress has been made.** Initiatives, long-term investment programmes and public policies have been implemented at various levels of governance in the EU and its Member States. The EU itself has invested 115 billion euros in cities over the last 7 years through European cohesion policy, and has, through EU development cooperation, provided substantial assistance to sustainable urban development to many of our partner countries.
- **But cities still face many crises and challenges. So we firmly maintain our collective commitment and wish to reinforce it,** cooperating with other committed partners and stakeholders.

Our vision for the future of cities across the world

- **The green and digital transition is a profound change to our economies, our lives and mind-sets. This, coupled with demographic change, will widen** territorial disparities in access to services, notably between urban and rural areas, and unless explicitly tackled it risks to leave behind people in vulnerable conditions.
- **Cities play an essential role in these transformations.** Many of the innovations and investments of tomorrow will happen in cities. Our sustainable future starts in cities.
- **At the same time, urban areas are also heavily dependent on peri-urban and rural areas.** These latter are essential for basic products, from food to natural resources, as well as leisure opportunities and natural resources. So any vision for sustainability must take account of all these territories and their relationship.

- At the European level, our vision for the global future of cities was set out in the **New Leipzig Charter**. Adopted in 2020, it is our key framework for sustainable urban development.
- It establishes a **strategic framework for sustainable and integrated urban development** in the EU. It focuses on the 'common good' for improving quality of life and social cohesion for all.
- The Charter sets out **three characteristics of ideal cities** — green, just and productive. We want all urban areas to have these characteristics, enabled by digitalisation, mainstreamed across the board.
- **Interoperability is a key enabler for the use of data to improve services within and across cities**, and to better employ data for improved decision-making. It is essential too, that use of digital technologies respects our rights and values. People centered smart cities are part of our focus and we are notably working with UN Habitat to support digital transformation.
- The charter reaffirms the importance of **multi-level governance for good urban development policies**. All the levels of government must work together to deliver more efficient and inclusive local public services. These services are a key enabler of the transition towards smarter cities and regions.
- All these points rely on **policies and strategies which are territorially sensitive**. Territories matter both in the crisis and in the recovery. They matter for the green and digital transitions and for social inclusion. We cannot tackle these issues if we are spatially blind.

Our support for more resilient, sustainable and inclusive cities

- **In the European Union, ambitious goals have been set within the framework of the European Green Deal** to activate transformative changes on the ground and make the EU's economy sustainable and climate-neutral by 2050.
- **But turning the European Green Deal into reality requires substantial investment and policy efforts**. Cities will be where these actions happen – and key players in these actions. We need cities for bold and innovative measures, as well as structural changes; for example for the decarbonisation of the built environment or for providing access to green public spaces to all.
- The city of **Katowice**, our hosts for this event, is a good example of this transition. We welcome their significant commitment to zero carbon, to regeneration of the post-industrial landscape and abandoned buildings, and to the strong place given to culture.
- The vision we have set for the global future, with greener, more just and productive cities, is translated on the ground by **integrated development strategies** sustaining public and private investments.
- The **European Union's cohesion policy** is a key instrument. It aims to reduce regional disparities and strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion.
- Its **dedicated urban dimension** has been strengthened and includes a number of key parameters and principles for sustainable, inclusive and integrated urban development.

- We are **promoting integrated strategies for territorial development based on investments targeting neighbourhoods, cities and, especially, functional urban areas**. We promote territorial integration, seizing opportunities for development and collaboration between different areas, urban, peri-urban and rural, and **answering local needs in very diverse territorial contexts**.
- To make this transformation a definitive success, we need to ensure **ownership on the ground**. **We are following the principles of the New Urban Agenda**, involving local actors, including economic and social partners, as well as civil society and citizens, in planning and implementation.
- We support **cities of all sizes**. We acknowledge the crucial role played by small and medium sized cities in **balanced territorial development**, providing opportunities for all. Moreover, in the context of **EU development cooperation** and in line with its vision for the global future of cities, the EU provides substantial assistance through a multitude of programmes and channels to its **partner countries and cities** to support sustainable urban development and to implement the UN's New Urban Agenda.
- **A recent example of a new EU external action aimed at building cities' resilience and inclusivity is STRIVE Cities**, to support the role of cities in preventing and countering violent extremism, particularly in the MENA region and East/Southern Africa.
- Within the programming of development cooperation under the **European Union's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)** we have seen a marked increase in the focus on sustainable urban development as an area of intervention.
- Yet, as the world is urbanising rapidly, **natural disasters, conflicts and displacement crises increase and have heavier consequences in urban settings**.
- **Considering as well urban crises and their impact on populations, the EU has supported advocacy related to impact of disasters on cities**, urban preparedness has been included as one of the four priorities under the Disaster Preparedness budget as part of the EU's humanitarian aid budget. Engagement with relevant stakeholder, in particular local authorities and communities, the private sector and humanitarian and development actors, is also key.

We will accelerate the delivery of the New Urban Agenda

- **The European Union and its Member States are ready to accelerate the New Urban Agenda**. We want to maximise and reinforce its contribution to transformative change. In this context, **we are proud to have recently updated our commitment to accelerating the implementation of its global objectives**.
- **This is why we presented updated and new Voluntary Commitments** at the High Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda on the 28 April 2022. Our objective is to move sustainable urban development forward, six years after Habitat III.

- **First, the EU and its Member States are renewing the three commitments they made in 2016.** All these initiatives are being extended and continued :
 - **The EU and its Member States recently decided to renew the Urban Agenda for the EU.** This is part of our commitment to fostering multi-level governance and improving the urban dimension of EU policies.
 - **The Degree of Urbanisation, proposed together with our partners, was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission as a new global method for aggregating subnational urban data.** We support countries implementing it with tools and data developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. More and more countries are using the method for wider comparability, better measuring and reporting on the implementation of SDGs at local level.
 - **We have also extended our International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme (IURC), which supports cooperation between cities and regions globally.** This is to enable them to work on sustainable solutions to common urban challenges, in the green and digital transitions and for recovery.
- In addition, we are putting forward three new voluntary commitments to accelerate the delivery of the New Urban Agenda :
 - **As a fourth commitment, EU support to external cooperation and partnerships.** Within the framework of the Global Gateway and the external dimension of the European Green Deal, the EU will significantly scale up its engagement in, and support to, integrated sustainable urban development in EU partner countries, including enhancing access to finance through the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). The EU will work in concert with EU Member States for greater coordination, scale and impacts within the Team Europe Initiatives.
 - **The EU and its MS wish to present the mission on climate-neutral cities by 2030 as a fifth commitment.** We will support 100 European cities to act as hubs of experimentation and innovation for green, digital and inclusive transformations. In turn, these cities will serve as models and inspiration for cities worldwide, through initiatives such as the global Urban Transitions Mission that we developed with the Global Covenant of Mayors under Mission Innovation.
 - **Finally, a new sixth commitment is introduced with the New European Bauhaus.** This initiative aims to inspire a global green transformation while simultaneously addressing other global challenges -such as the digital transition- by combining sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics.it involved multiple sectors in a creative process. The approach is innovative, transversal and human centred, and has the goal to improve all aspects of citizens' lives, from buildings and public spaces to products, services and ecosystems, to mind-sets and behaviours.

- The EU also continues to support cities in the **monitoring of the SDGs and of the New Urban Agenda**, to provide solid and comparable frameworks and data for better monitoring and reporting at global level.
- Finally, the **Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040** adopted under the auspices of the **Union for the Mediterranean** in 2021 is our commitment to support the development of sustainable and inclusive cities in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

War in Ukraine

- **We would also like to take the opportunity of this forum, to remind the world that the EU and its Member States condemn, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.** This aggression is unprovoked and unjustified. It violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter. It undermines international security, stability and has a devastating effect on human lives and the environment. We also condemn the involvement of Belarus in this aggression against Ukraine.
- Progress on the 2030 Agenda is jeopardized by the disruptive impact of factors such as inflation, slow growth, supply chain and production disruptions, global food insecurity, and debt unsustainability. Urban infrastructure and heritage is being destroyed, leaving Ukrainian cities in ruin.
- Facing the urgency to welcome millions of Ukrainian citizens in our Member States and cities, **the EU has reacted by unlocking several possibilities of support, notably Cohesion Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE).** We also wish to encourage the continuation of New Urban Agenda related actions, in post-conflict countries.

Concluding words

- **Finally, the EU and its MS would like to reiterate that multilevel governance, partnerships between different local authorities, participatory and multi-level integrated approaches are more essential than ever.** They are the only way to build strong development urban strategies, policies and frameworks, which will support the transformation of our societies and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **The EU and its Member States remain mobilised on all fronts to pursue and accelerate their actions to promote sustainable and integrated urban development** globally, with strategic commitments, ambitious policies, major investments, strong partnerships and accelerated delivery. Europe's cities need this, the world's cities need this, and we are ready to deliver.