



UN General Assembly
High-Level Meeting on the
New Urban Agenda

Written statement addressed by the EU and its Member States

New York - 28 April 2022

Achievements of the European Union to implement the New Urban Agenda

- **We are pleased to participate to this timely meeting to discuss the acceleration of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.** Our collective engagement is of utmost importance to support sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development
- **The European Union and its Member States have been closely engaged in supporting sustainable urban development as an overarching goal,** pursuing the delivery of the New Urban Agenda's principles while adapting to new challenges and reacting to unprecedented shocks.
- **In its external cooperation, the European Union has also engaged with, and provided support to, its partner countries** in furthering the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
- **These elements are well reflected in the Second Quadrennial report, which provides an excellent account of the efforts realised, and of the efforts still needed to be accomplished to trigger and support an integrated and place-based approach to sustainable urban development,** thus facilitating the promotion of well-managed, socially inclusive, safe, resilient and resource-efficient cities. This approach has to be considered also in light of the impact of the multiple crisis, which are currently testing our resilience.
- **Looking at what has already been achieved, the European Union and its Member States have completed the three Voluntary commitments that were taken in Habitat III to implement the New Urban Agenda** through the Urban Agenda for the European Union, through producing a global people-based definition of cities, and through supporting city-to-city cooperation.
- **In recent years, much has been done at various levels of governance in the EU and its Member States in order to develop and implement initiatives, long-term investment programmes and policies to materialise our common action.** The European Union has notably invested EUR 115 billion in cities over the last 7 years, notably through Cohesion policy, it has provided substantial assistance through development cooperation in many countries outside the European Union.
- **Cities have an essential role to play in carrying out the transition towards resilient, just and green societies.** They are crucial parts of the process, to innovate, to invest, and to mobilise, together with other levels of governance, in order to make urbanisation sustainable, and ensure territorial cohesion.
- **For this reason, the European Union has implemented support not only for investments, but also for equipping cities and urban actors with tools and knowledge to tackle the multi-faceted challenges they face,** and develop place-based approaches.
- **The EU and its Member States continue to be committed to support cities with respect to monitoring of the SDGs and of the UN New Urban Agenda, at both urban and territorial level.** The use and promotion of the definition of Degree of Urbanisation, as well as the support to SDG Voluntary Local Reviews, demonstrates the ambition of the European Union and its Member States to provide high quality, comparable data and frameworks for better monitoring and reporting at global level.

- **In the European Union, ambitious goals have been set to activate transformative changes on the ground and reach the objective of making the European Union's economy sustainable and climate-neutral by 2050.** This is the objective of the **European Green Deal** as the European Union's strategy and roadmap for sustainable development.

The EU forward-looking approach to accelerate the delivery of the New Urban Agenda

- **The European Union stands ready to support the acceleration of the New Urban Agenda's delivery, by maximising and reinforcing its contribution for transformative change.**
- **In addition to policies related to this agenda within the European Union itself and the European Green Deal, this ambition also applies to the European Union's external action policies. Indeed, the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe will support countries most in need to overcome their long-term developmental challenges.** It includes a spending target of 30% to step up efforts on climate change. The President of the European Commission subsequently pledged additional 4 billion EUR for climate change during her second State of the Union 2021 address.
- **Cohesion policy will remain the European Union's main investment instrument to support Member States, regions, cities and people to adapt to global challenges.** Its sustainable urban development dimension has been reinforced for the period 2021-2027. It will go closer to EU's citizens, mobilising substantial investments in urban areas directed to priorities and projects selected by cities themselves on the basis of their sustainable and integrated urban development strategies.
- **A new European Urban Initiative will also help them support innovative projects, and improve cities' capacity and knowledge** for integrated development and participatory approaches.
- **The European Climate Pact has been launched to bring together regions, local communities, civil society, and businesses to design and commit to a set of pledges to bring about a change in behaviour,** from the individual to the largest multinational. It is working alongside the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, in which local governments are leading the way in reduction of GHG emissions and adaptation to climate change at municipal level, showing ambition and launching tangible actions in engaging citizens and stakeholders in their territories.
- **Through the Living-in.EU movement, the EU is also working with cities, communities and city organisations committed to accelerating their digital transformation 'European way'** — a human-centered approach, co-creation with citizens, ethically and socially responsible data usage, and use open and interoperable technical standards, which aligns fully with the UN approach.
- **With these policies and programmes, we will support cities of all sizes,** thus acknowledging the crucial role played by small and medium sized cities for balanced territorial development and urban-rural linkages, providing opportunities for all.

- **We also take this opportunity to express the full solidarity of the European Union and its Member States with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.** The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermines European and global security and stability.
- **Today the European Union and its Member States are mobilising support to help Ukraine and cities welcoming Ukrainian citizens to provide for their most pressing needs, under the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE).**
- **More than 4 000 000 people have fled Ukraine following the escalation of the Russian invasion and have mostly entered the neighbouring EU Member States Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, with more than 2 million people arriving in Poland only.**
- **Local authorities are mobilised to address the needs of Ukrainian refugees coming to Poland. One of them is the host city of the 11th edition of the World Urban Forum – Katowice.** It currently provides help locally and it is closely cooperating with Ukrainian city of Lviv to ensure the distribution of humanitarian aid.
- **We also wish to encourage the continuation of New Urban Agenda related actions in post conflict countries.**

Our update and new EU Voluntary Commitments

- **We believe it is of utmost importance for the European Union and its Member States to update its engagement to accelerating the implementation of its global objectives. Today, at the occasion of this major institutional UN gathering, the EU and its Member States wish to present both their updated and new Voluntary Commitments** to move sustainable urban development forward, six years after Habitat III.
- **First of all, we wish to update the commitments taken in Quito** as our activities are continuing and expanding for these three initiatives.
 - **The European Union and its Member States recently decided to put in place a renewed Urban Agenda for the EU.** The New Leipzig Charter triggered this new phase of the initiative, to continue fostering multi-level governance and improving the urban dimension of EU policies while considering urban development impacts at all levels.
 - **We will also implement the Degree of Urbanisation, which we proposed together with our partners, as a new global method for aggregating subnational urban data.** Following up on the endorsement of this definition at UN level, further work will be pursued to develop tools and extend the use of the definition for wider comparability and better measuring as well as reporting on the implementation of SDGs at local level.
 - **In 2021, we extended our International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme (IURC), which supports cooperation between cities and regions globally, for them to**

work on sustainable solutions to common urban and territorial challenges, with particular attention to the green and digital transitions and the inclusive post-pandemic recovery.

- In addition, in order to reinforce our engagement we would like to put forward three new voluntary commitments to accelerate the delivery of the New Urban Agenda :

- **Our fourth commitment relate to the 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 on and support to integrated sustainable urban development in EU partner countries. The EU will seek to work in concert with EU Member States for greater coordination, scale and impacts within the Team Europe Initiatives.

Enhancing access to finance for investments in urban and peri-urban areas constitutes a major instrument to move towards sustainable urban development. The EU will through its Investment Facilities and the new guarantee schemes, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), support partner countries in mobilising additional finance, including for sustainable urban development, with a dedicated investment window targeting investments in cities. It will cover Sub-Saharan Africa, the EU neighbourhood, enlargement countries, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

- **The EU presents the European mission on climate-neutral and smart cities as a fifth commitment.** We will support 100 cities as hubs of experimentation and innovation for the green and digital transition by 2030 and for an inclusive post-pandemic recovery. In turn, these cities will model and inspire similar transformations for cities around the world through initiatives such as the Global Covenant of Mayors.
- **Finally, the EU introduces a new sixth commitment with the New European Bauhaus.** This initiative aims at inspiring a global green transformation and improving citizens’ lives through an innovative, integrated and human-centred way, by improving all the aspects of life, from buildings and public spaces to products, services and ecosystems, to mind-sets and behaviours.

A key aspect of the innovative potential of the initiative lies in its concept, addressing global challenges in a transversal way, through holistic solutions integrating the dimensions of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics.

The New European Bauhaus wants to promote new ways of living where sustainability matches beauty and quality of experience for all, thereby accelerating the green transition, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. It aims to bring transformation to mind-sets and cultures, in geographical and physical spaces, in business ecosystems and economies.

This commitment will allow launching a global conversation on the New European Bauhaus, in line with the principles of the New Urban Agenda, and trigger new ideas, actions, gather examples and challenges to bring this movement and its ambitions to another level of cooperation, bridging the global and the local dimensions.

Conclusion

- **To collectively support the transformation of our societies and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**, multilevel governance, partnerships between different local authorities, participatory and integrated approaches are more than ever essential to build corresponding strong strategies, policies and frameworks.
- **The European Union and its Member States remain mobilised on all fronts to pursue and accelerate their actions to promote sustainable urban development** globally, with strategic commitments, ambitious policies and strong partnerships. We stand ready to deliver.