



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MINISTER MARCELO SUAREZ SALVIA, PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 20: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) AND STRENGTHENING OF THE UN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (New York, 1 November 2011)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 20: "Implementation of the Outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and Strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)".

2. The Group thanks the Secretary-General for the reports contained in documents A/66/281 and A/66/282 as well as his note on Coordinated Implementation of the Habitat Agenda contained in document A/66/326. We welcome the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, Dr. Joan Clos to New York, and thank him for his statement.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group of 77 and China reiterates the important role which the United Nations Human Settlements Programme plays in the overall pursuit of sustainable development. Since the last UN Conference on Human Settlements in 1996, a number of significant developments and challenges have emerged. Cities are now home to more than half of the world's population and have much more dominant role as engines of national economic growth and development. More and more people are moving into cities in unprecedented numbers in search of better living conditions, leading to rapid geographical expansion of urban settlements, particularly in developing countries. This has resulted in mega urban regions and unplanned peri-urban areas where urban slums are located and urban poverty is concentrated.

4. In addition, there is the emergence of new global issues such as transnational migration, globalization, climate change and urban insecurity and crime. Notwithstanding, cities offer opportunities to provide leadership in climate change mitigation and adaptation, through inclusive urban planning and management, particularly in the areas of domestic energy and urban transport.

5. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in the frequency, intensity of natural and human-made disasters as well as their impact on cities. UN-Habitat should continue identifying and sharing innovative urban development planning and management approaches and practices that are responsive to the global challenge of climate change.

6. It is in light of these persistent and new and emerging issues that the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General in Resolution A/64/207 of 2009 to prepare a report on the question of convening a United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (HABITAT III) in collaboration with the UN-HABITAT Governing Council. The Group is of the view that the Secretary-General's report presents sufficient grounds for holding HABITAT III in 2016, twenty years after the last UN Conference on Human Settlements. This Conference would be

crucial as it would provide a platform to review the HABITAT Agenda in view of these persistent and new and emerging issues.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The Group is concerned about the continued increase in the number of slum dwellers despite the attainment of the MDG target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Despite the achievement of this target, the number of slum dwellers is approaching 1 billion, and this trend will significantly increase if unchecked.

8. In response to this challenge, the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT at its 23rd Session held in April 2011, adopted a resolution inviting Governments, Regions and Local Authorities to enumerate their slum population and set voluntary and realistic national, regional and local targets for slum improvement to be attained by 2020. In addition, it is noted that UN-HABITAT was asked to provide assistance in these efforts. The Group requests that UN-HABITAT and developing countries be provided with the necessary financial support to achieve this.

9. We continue to express our support for the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013 and financing operations in support of pro-poor housing and urban development, as they are important developments to help take Habitat Agenda forward. We hope that the plan will provide renewed impetus to coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and to achieving targets 10 and 11 of MDG-7.

Mr. Chairman,

10. As already stated, more than 50% of the world population now lives in urban areas. Sustainable development is, therefore, becoming increasingly dependent on sustainable urbanization. The Group urges Governments to include sustainable urbanization in the outcome of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

In conclusion, the Group looks forward to creative discussions with a view to significantly improving the lives of slum dwellers as per the Millennium Declaration, and to addressing persistent and new and emerging issues.

Thank you.