



# AUSTRALIA



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## **Statement on the New Urban Agenda**

### **HABITAT III – The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development**

**Statement delivered by Ms Gillian Bird, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations**

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Thank you Mr President.

Let me begin by joining others in thanking and congratulating the Government of Ecuador for its successful hosting of this important conference and for its generous hospitality.

Mr President in adopting SDG11 – *making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable* – as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, UN Member States clearly signalled that efforts to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all must take urbanisation into account. And in including SDG11 as part of this ambitious Agenda, we recognised that the aspirations of the 2030 agenda – sustainability, resilience, inclusion, accessibility, safety, innovation, and

protection of the most vulnerable – should inform our approaches to urbanisation.

Australia therefore welcomes the imminent adoption of the New Urban Agenda. It is a significant collaborative achievement that will drive a global approach to urbanisation over the coming decades.

The New Urban Agenda will advance multiple SDGs in addition to SDG11, including: ending poverty; achieving gender equality; improving water management and sanitation; providing modern energy for all; enabling sustained and inclusive economic growth; ensuring resilient infrastructure; and promoting peaceful societies and better institutional governance .

Mr President,

In 2007, for the first time in history, more than half the global population lived in cities.

By 2050, we are forecast to reach two thirds of all people living in cities – almost an exact reversal of the situation in 1950.

In Australia's own region, urban populations in Asia are expected to triple by 2050. And in the Pacific, urban populations are projected to double in the next 24 years.

The global urbanisation trend is one of the most profound transitions in human history and has occurred in less than a century. It reflects a simple economic reality – cities provide the greatest opportunity to access employment, wealth and prosperity. No country in the industrial age has achieved significant economic growth without urbanisation.

In Australia's overseas aid program, urbanisation influences many of our investments including transport infrastructure, disaster and climate resilient economic infrastructure, and services for strengthening national and regional development planning.

We are particularly aware that as more people and assets are located in cities, vulnerability and exposure to disasters increases. This means we need to continue to invest in risk-informed infrastructure, planning and governance.

As such, we applaud the commitment to build and strengthen urban resilience to enable societies, institutions and communities to withstand and recover from natural, human-made and other shocks.

Mr President,

In Australia our 20 largest cities are home to 75 per cent of our population.

While our regions are vitally important to our national wellbeing, it is our cities—where most of us live and work—that contribute the majority of Australia’s economic output.

Despite Australia’s cities being known as some of the most liveable in the world, not all Australians are sharing in the benefits. We have challenges with housing affordability, traffic and congestion on our roads, and with too many people commuting long distances to work.

Our urbanisation trend is set to continue and ensuring the sustainability and liveability of our cities will be more critical than ever.

That is why, for the first time in our history, Australia has created a ministry for cities, and in April this year Prime Minister Turnbull launched the Government's Smart Cities Plan.

In effect, the Smart Cities Plan is Australia's vision statement for cities, with a focus on Smart Policy; Smart Investment; and Smart Technology.

It sets out a policy agenda to:

- . Support jobs growth closer to people's home;
- . Unlock housing supply to improve affordability;
- . Invest in infrastructure aligned with long-term planning;
- . Deploy smart technology and open data to improve lives; and
- . Deliver clean, green cities with access to open spaces.

While these priorities were selected for the Australian context, they align strongly with the New Urban Agenda because developing sustainable, liveable cities is an

essential part of enhancing human prosperity and alleviating poverty.

Mr President,

The New Urban Agenda is a truly ambitious undertaking.

Its success requires the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders: from local and national governments, to the private sector, civil society, and, critically, residents who live in these cities – and I am pleased there is such a strong Australian contingent, from all sectors, participating here in Quito.

We must work cooperatively to ensure our cities, our infrastructure, and our communities are inclusive, safe, accessible, resilient and, most importantly, sustainable.

Thank you.