



**Statement by
Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
Implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitats II)
and strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) (res. 69/226)**

4 November 2015

Distinguished Chairperson,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). AOSIS associates itself with the statement delivered by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. *We welcome the Secretary General's report of 2014 on the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II and strengthening of UN-Habitat.*

Mr Chair

3. We all recognize the global trend of movement from rural locations to urban centers, with today over half of the world's total population living in cities. This number is expected to reach 70 percent by 2050. Issues related to sustainable urban planning are of great importance to Small Island Development States (SIDS); however, it is important to recognize the many varieties of how the urban-rural divide is different in SIDS compared to other countries.
4. Many SIDS are very remote, with islands isolated even from one another, let alone from neighbouring states, posing challenges for service delivery and transportation of essential goods. Some SIDS feature smaller populations spread over hundreds or thousands of dispersed islands, while other SIDS are city-states, and others still are larger, relative to other SIDS, and host to multiple urban areas of varying size. It is important to understand this variation in human settlements when addressing urbanisation to ensure that we create mechanisms for implementation that that can be effective in different circumstances. AOSIS advocated during the 2030 Sustainable Development negotiations to include reference to "human settlements" in addition to cities throughout the outcome document to best represent the variety of urban settings.
5. In this committee, one of our central concerns in addressing the UN Human Settlements Program is how we can align our ongoing work and Habitat III with the 2030 Agenda. While many of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets are

relevant to UN Habitat's work, Goal 11 explicitly urges the international community to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." The targets for Goal 11 address basic services, housing, reducing the environmental impact of cities and the protection of cultural and natural heritage. These issues matter greatly to SIDS; however of special note is the commitment to "by 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global GDP caused by disasters, including water related disasters..." as well as the objective to realize resilient climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

6. In order to achieve this Goal we must seize the opportunity to spur the advancement of climate adaptation across urban settlements of all sizes by ensuring new and existing buildings, transportation lines, utilities etc are environmentally sustainable and resilient. Climate change and related extreme weather events are not momentary blips for SIDS – they mean halted or reversed economic growth, redirected resources to emergency efforts, overburdened institutions, loss and damages to vital communication and transportation infrastructure, and importantly the destruction of housing in already land scarce areas, or in many instances, the likelihood of wiping off cities, urban settlements altogether as demonstrated in recent cyclones/hurricanes in some SIDS.
7. While SIDS require robust construction, they also face more traditional concerns such as limited, affordable housing. Target 11.1 addresses housing and is a laudable objective, particularly for small island states that face that must grapple pre-existing social challenges in high dense, isolated areas, not a recipe for easy or immediate success.
8. Any accomplishment of the goals and targets will benefit from integrating the targets into national plans and priorities so that each goal and target is realized at the ground level. In addition, it is beneficial for all countries to embrace genuine and durable partnerships that consider local needs and the regional context. Partnerships provide knowledge creation and sharing, citizen engagement, and benefit from private and social sector experience. Assessing progress of national work alongside global partnerships that is holistic and qualitative in addition to quantitative as mentioned previously.
9. We welcome the upcoming Habitat III conference, to be graciously hosted by Ecuador, as a chance to reconsider urbanization for all categories of human settlements, as already highlighted by the conference's thematic meeting this coming November of "intermediate cities." In preparing to build Habitat III's outcome of a 20-year strategy on urbanization we need to support technical capacity in developing states so that municipalities can collect and analyse their own data to improve policy and track progress. Furthermore, underlying this plan must be a cohesive integration of the three pillars of sustainable development across urban rules and regulations, urban planning and design, and financing and investment in urban basic services. Our

end goal should be to make cities and towns of all shapes and sizes more functional, accessible, and sustainable, as live-able public spaces. Let us think pragmatically about the New Urban Agenda to shape our cities into drivers of economic opportunity, while ensuring public and ecological health.

10. AOSIS is committed to moving HABITAT III forward in 2016 as the first major UN conference following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Following the recent celebration on October 31st of World Cities Day, we are eager to promote cooperation around thoughtful planning and innovation of settlement policy, adding the unique perspective of SIDS to the conversation. By working together we can generate the momentum needed to thoughtfully design a new future of sustainable urbanisation.

I thank you.