

# **Commissioner Crețu at the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

Opening Speech by Commissioner **Crețu**, in charge of Regional Policy, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, at the Opening Plenary of the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (7-13 February 2018)

Mister Minister, Madame Executive Director and distinguished delegates,

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

First of all I would like to congratulate Ms Dato' Maimunah Mohd Sharif on her appointment as the new UN Habitat Executive Director. Mindful of the role of the UN Habitat as the leading agency on urban issues, we wish her all the best and would like to assure her of the full cooperation of the European Union and its Member States in carrying out her duties and the upcoming reform of the organisation.

The adoption of the New Urban Agenda at the Habitat III conference in Quito was a crucial step forward in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also a cornerstone for other key agendas of 2015, in particular the Paris Agreement and the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The European Union sees the New Urban Agenda as a collective instrument that will empower both the international community and local governments to turn global urban challenges into great opportunities. As former Secretary General Ban Ki Moon noted, "Our Struggle for Global Sustainability will be won or lost in cities".

The New Urban agenda ambitiously sets the work ahead for thousands of cities on all five continents. The European Union is strongly committed to its implementation, all the more since it reflects well Europe's own vision for sustainable urbanisation. Indeed, we call for an integrated, people-centred and place-based approach that takes into account the diversity of cities and their wider territorial context, while building on urban-rural linkages. The European Union and its Member States can pride themselves on having been instrumental in shaping the New Urban Agenda.

As we have now moved into implementation, the European Union and its Member States intends to continue playing a leading role by taking forward its commitment.

We adopted the Urban Agenda for the European Union which encompasses many similar approaches and fundamental principles to the global New Urban Agenda.

The Urban Agenda for the European Union is based on a partnership approach involving local governments and other stakeholders. It aims at strengthening the urban dimension in European policies. This means involving and mobilising

cities in the design and delivery of these policies.

The European approach seeks to promote a better knowledge base and an effective exchange process, leading to more integrated policy-making, more effective and efficient regulations and needs-oriented funding.

Altogether, this entails a significant change to policy-making, within and for urban areas, based on a renewed commitment to strengthening the capacity of sub-national and local governments in all aspects of governance. I can assure you of our will to support them, in particular regarding revenue generation and access to finance, including data and statistical capacities.

In addition to implementing its Urban Agenda, the European Union and its Member States is also providing substantial external cooperation support to partner countries and cities to take the New Urban Agenda forward. This not only includes the newly launched European External Investment Plan, but also a wide range projects and of initiatives by the EU and its Member States in support of sustainable urbanisation and urban resilience.

Notably, city to city cooperation has proven its worth and value. We will continue to promote this efficient tool. The political ownership of countries and cities in embracing and promoting the New Urban Agenda is key; the European Union and its Member States stands ready to share experiences and provide concrete support.

The European Union and its Member States is also committed to engaging with partners around the globe to promote inclusive and sustainable urban development. Actions should target the specific needs of persons and groups in a marginalised and vulnerable situation, including persons with disabilities, forcibly displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees as well as those living in informal settlements and slums.

The European Union will support partners to improve the delivery of basic services and social support schemes, reinforce capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies, crises and humanitarian disasters to ensure dignity, including equitable access to food security and decent and affordable housing, and to improve the quality of life of fast-growing urban populations. In line with the New Urban Agenda, the European Union and its Member States will promote sustainable spatial planning, equitable management of land and real estate markets, sustainable urban mobility and low-emission infrastructure networks and buildings. It will also support smart, safe and resilient cities that make use of opportunities from digitalisation, innovation and new technologies.

To conclude, I wish to emphasise that the New Urban Agenda is the outcome of our joint efforts to come forward with a truly transformative agenda. It contains all elements needed to go beyond business as usual, and to localise the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this respect, the World Urban Forum represents a great opportunity to reiterate our commitment to making the New Urban Agenda a key implementing tool to reach the targets and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. Being the first session to focus on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, we expect the World Urban Forum to concretely contribute to the first report on its implementation.

Together we can turn the global challenges of sustainable urbanisation into global assets for all. The New Urban Agenda is a once-in-a-generation opportunity; let us not miss this historical moment.

Thank you very much.