

Cairo Declaration

On Housing, and Sustainable Urban Development

Cairo - Egypt, 20 – 22 December 2015

We, the Arab Ministers of Housing and Urban Development, convening in the First Arab Ministerial Forum on the "Arab Urbanization - Present Challenges and Future Prospects," held in Cairo - Arab Republic of Egypt, from 20 - 22 December 2015, as part of the regional preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which will take place in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 – 20 October 2016;

Pursuant to the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) resolution No. 24/8, which establishes the "*regional technical support on sustainable housing and urban development, including the Arab States Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development,*" issued on the 19th of April 2013;

Citing the commitments adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo - Egypt in 1994, which stipulate that "the process of urbanization is fundamental to the economic and social development," as well as the Second United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat), held in Istanbul - Turkey in 1996, and after reviewing the Habitat Agenda included in the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations resolution No. S-25/2, on the 9th of June 2001;

As part of our commitment to implement all the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the 11th goal of sustainable development: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable," and all targets falling thereunder, especially

target 11.a: "Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning," as well as the Arab pledges made at the Third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 and Climate Change Summit (COP21);

Reaffirming our commitment to all local, national and regional preparations for the United Nations Conference (Habitat III) and our contributions to the development of the new urban agenda that shall be adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in 2016 (Habitat III);

Reiterating the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (2015 – 2030);

In light of Resolution no. (9) issued by the League of Arab States Ministerial Council for Housing and Construction in its 29th session, held in December 2012 in Iraq, on the establishment of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development, which was presented by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Arab countries in the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) of 2013;

Acknowledging that

- Urbanization rate in the Arab region has been one of the highest rates in the world in recent years. Meanwhile, these rates have been accompanied by an increase in population pressure, rapid urbanization, large-scale growth in major cities and high rates of urbanization in medium and small cities, causing an over-load on infrastructure and the already limited resources and an ever-mounting pressure to provide adequate housing for all, including urban and basic services;
- The increase in poverty ratio in cities is causing a growth in the number of slums and widening the urban gap between sectors of population, which reduces the chances of equal access to adequate housing and basic services;
- Israeli occupation of Arab territories, violent conflicts, civil strife and terrorism have a devastating effect on cities, towns and living conditions of their inhabitants and their social harmony;

- The forced internal and international migrations as well as the mass exoduses of refugees and displaced people strongly affect the Arab cities;
- Promoting efficient political administration, boosting the foundations of good governance and strengthening the national and local central authorities, along with taking comprehensive steps to enhance the decision-making process, are essential elements to address urbanization challenge in Arab states,

Realizing

- The importance of ensuring gender equality and empowering women to access adequate housing and to contribute effectively in the development process of the society;
- The necessity of ensuring the rehabilitation and integration of vulnerable and marginalized categories and people with special needs in urban communities as well as promoting the integration of youth and unleashing their creative potentials to develop their civil societies;
- The importance of developing rural areas and providing livelihoods to promote stability and work there along with promoting economic opportunities and building bridges of communication with nearby cities.

Acknowledging

- The delicate situation which some of Arab states are going through and the cruelty of civil conflicts and terrorism suffered by urban and rural communities, which caused a systematic demolition of the ancient Arab cities and world heritage listed sites in many Arab cities;
- The Arab strong and firm stance in the face of policies and procedures of the Israeli occupation to Judaize Jerusalem and change its demographic nature and heritage.

We reaffirm all the outcomes of major UN conferences on population, development, women, children and climate.

We also stress the first goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

Based on all of the above, we hereby decide the following:

1. Take all measures to implement the new urban agenda that will emanate from Habitat III, taking into account the fact that the human being is at the centre.
2. The establishment of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development as an advisory mechanism to enhance the policies and strategies for sustainable housing and urban development in Arab states, under the auspices of the League of Arab States, which shall develop the Forum’s appropriate institutional framework to ensure it works effectively within the LAS system;
3. The Arab Ministerial Forum shall serve as a platform for interaction among different visions, with the objective of formulating regional strategies and policies that guide national and local policies and strategies. The Forum shall also provide mechanisms for the development of regional positions and unified views in order to contribute to the ongoing international development dialogue, in particular the development of a regional vision on how to implement the 11th goal, as well as the implementation of the new urban agenda and relevant goals. Furthermore, the Forum shall seek to promote and expand cooperation initiatives among Arab states in the areas of housing and sustainable urban development. Additionally, the Forum will integrate the efforts of research institutions and academia, on both regional and national level, in order to enhance the knowledge base, by providing them with social, economic, environmental and demographic dynamics.

Mechanisms

- a. The Arab Council of Ministers of Housing and Construction League of Arab States is the supervisor of the Arab Ministerial Forum for Sustainable Housing and Urban Development, in coordination with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the host country.

- b.** The mandate of the technical secretariat of the forum to be expanded to include the municipalities, the private sector, the civil society and stakeholders in the field of sustainable urban development.
- c.** Call upon Arab countries to identify national focal points for sustainable urban development responsible of contributing to the organization of the Forum and follow up the implementation of the outcomes at the national level in coordination with all the relevant national parties.
- d.** Develop a funding mechanism for the activities of the Forum, supporting its technical secretariat and the implementation of its outputs.
- e.** Call upon the Arab countries to formulate a national plan to achieve the sustainable development goals related to sustainable urban development; and establish a national committee to follow up on all the relevant issues to sustainable urban development, gathering all government agencies concerned with urban development, the private sector and other stakeholders.
- f.** Invite the UN Human Settlements Programme to support the efforts of the Arab Ministerial Forum for housing and sustainable urban development and recognize it as a regional leading body entrusted with the formulation and implementation of its policies and programmes at the Arab regional level.