Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

We thank the Secretary General for his report on this agenda item and congratulate Ecuador for successful hosting of Habitat III Conference at Quito.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of the Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairperson,

The world is witnessing urbanization at an unprecedented pace across continents. The trends are clear. More than half the world’s population already lives in urban areas. By 2050 this proportion is projected to surpass 70%.

People are moving to urban areas for a variety of reasons, primarily in search of better opportunities, for education, for skills and for jobs. While urban areas are often centres of economic growth and prosperity, they are increasingly unable to provide access to even the basic civic amenities to all their inhabitants. Much of the urbanization is proceeding in an unplanned manner.

If the urbanization can be better resourced and managed to cater to the expanding needs including affordable accommodation, efficient public transport, clean drinking water, sanitation and waste management, power, affordable and quality schools and hospitals etc., it can prove to become a force for sustainable economic growth and development and social transformation.

Mr. Chairperson,

One sixth of the population of the world resides in India. Urbanization is taking place in India at a fast pace, coinciding with the rapid economic growth in the country. We are, therefore, acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities offered by the ongoing urbanization.
Mr. Chairperson,

If managed well, Sustainable urbanization can serve as a transformational force for achieving and advancing sustainable development.

This fact has been correctly recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A standalone Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable is evidence of the resolve of the international community to address this issue holistically.

In the spirit of SDGs, the new urban agenda is broad in nature, duly permitting variations for national circumstances, and tries to catalyze and incentivize better urban policy through sharing of development experiences

Mr. Chairperson,

India is a founding member of UN-Habitat, and we value our partnership with the organization. We welcome the adoption of the New Urban Agenda adopted last week in Quito, Ecuador, at Habitat III.

It is indeed a welcome coincidence and synergistic opportunity that just as a large developing country like India is embarking on a new dynamic model of urbanization; multilateral efforts have charted a New Urban Agenda.

Mr. Chairperson,

India is one among the largest urban systems in the world, with around 377 million people residing in urban areas, comprising one third of its total population. Urban areas generate over 2/3rd of the country's GDP and account for 90% of government revenues.

The Government of India is undertaking several steps to better manage urbanization and turn urban centres into models for economic growth and sustainable development.

As one of the fastest growing large economies and a rapidly growing urban society, India is putting emphasis on a holistic approach to allow smart, resilient, equitable and sustainable urbanization.

The Government’s three flagship urban development initiatives, namely, the Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, Smart Cities Mission, and Housing for All, collectively represent a holistic and technology-led people-centric vision of urban development.

The Smart Cities Mission envisages development of 100 smart cities to enhance the quality of urban life and to provide a clean and suitable environment. This ambitious program which promises to transform India's urban landscape has been allocated over US$ 1.2 billion.
The Mission for Rejuvenation and Transformation of 500 cities of above 100,000 population aims to create infrastructure that has a direct link to provision of better services to the people. The Heritage City Development and Augmentation programme intends to support core infrastructure aimed at revitalization of heritage sites and nearby areas. The National Urban Livelihood mission envisages citizens to be adequately skilled to gain beneficial livelihoods and also to contribute to the economy.

Such specific urban development related Missions are further supported by special programmes such as Make-in-India, Digital India, Skilling India and Start up India which all together aim to reinvigorate and re-energise the cities as engines of economic growth and empowerment and as centres of improved quality of life.

To manage the challenge of urbanization a focused rural development strategy is also a must. Towards ensuring integrated development and also to promote and strengthen the complementarity between the rural and urban settlements, India has launched an ambitious National Rurban Mission.

Mr. Chairperson,

There is an inextricable link between economic development and sustainable urbanization. The developing countries are experiencing rapid urbanization rates at very low per capita income levels.

There can be little doubt that global efforts to combat poverty, promote inclusive growth and reduce environmental stress will increasingly be determined by the efforts we put in to integrate urban development into our larger socio-economic planning.

Mr. Chairperson,

The New Urban Agenda will guide the efforts around urbanization of a wide range of actors — nation states, city and regional leaders, international development funders, United Nations programmes and civil society — for the next 20 years.

India looks forward to and reaffirms its commitment to implementing the forward-looking outcome of the Habitat-III Conference and alignment of its own efforts to promote and achieve sustainable urbanization.

I thank you.