

Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III)

**Statement by IFAD: Mr. Karim Hussein, Strategic Planning Division,
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Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Fund for Agricultural Development is very pleased to be part of the preparations for Habitat III: it will be a key event in the international development calendar.

IFAD has a strong interest in fostering a sustainable urbanisation that recognizes the critical interdependence and nexus between urban and rural development, and the need to leverage urban-rural linkages for wider development. We note here that rural development and agriculture contribute in a major way to food security, poverty reduction and wider development.

It is very important to address these aspects in Habitat III to foster sustainable urbanisation processes – to incorporate the rural dimensions of urbanisation fully into the reflection, and into programming and policy choices.

Rural areas, including those closer to and in the hinterland of small, medium and large urban centres, are critically important for urbanisation: they are linked by agricultural value chains, ecosystem services, urban consumption that shapes demand for food and agricultural products, labour, services, natural resources, infrastructure, energy and transport. Urbanisation is transforming agriculture and rural opportunities and challenges; this transformation can be done well (be inclusive, foster synergies etc.) or badly (with consequences for the economy, society and equality).

Growing urban centres need rural areas to ensure sustainable urbanisation. There is a need for a new and balanced approach to urban and rural development, smallholder agriculture and food security to ensure urbanisation is socially, politically and economically sustainable.

To help integrate these elements and take advantage of opportunities in the Post-2015 agenda and Habitat III, which will be a very important event, IFAD is engaging at several levels; we hope these will contribute to a successful and groundbreaking Habitat III. For example:

- IFAD is involved in the inter-agency HLCP Working Group preparing a paper on the New UN Urban Agenda;
- IFAD has published a Post-2015 Policy Brief on “Leveraging the rural-urban nexus for development”²;
- it is engaging with FAO, research and civil society organisations to advance work and knowledge on City-Region Food Systems, notably through the creation of a knowledge platform; and
- it is seeking to understand further the nature of rural-urban transformations and food systems in different contexts, to inform food security narratives and identify policy options that foster sustainable transitions.

Let me close by emphasizing our view that Habitat III should take account of two key realities:

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² Available at: <http://www.ifad.org/pub/post2015/english/1.pdf>

- (i) First, the potentials in the agriculture and food systems that link urban and rural areas need to be maximized as a normal part of a balanced development process; and
- (ii) Second, development policies need to take into account urban-rural interdependencies: cities and other urban centres have key roles in stimulating rural development – but the connectivity of these cities and towns to their rural hinterlands and surrounding areas is often weak. Given urban dependence on rural areas and the roles of rural development in broader economic transformation, development policies need to integrate the rural dimensions of urbanisation.

The rural and urban are mutually dependent and their development can and should be mutually reinforcing.

We look forward to continuing to work together on this agenda.