

10 February 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at “The future of cities: an integrated approach to urban challenges”
UN-habitat event**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today for this important event on “The Future of Cities” and thank UN-Habitat and its partners for organizing this timely discussion.

Over the last two days, many participants in my high-level Thematic Debate on Means of Implementation emphasized the importance of formulating a transformative and inclusive post-2015 development agenda; one that takes into account the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

This holistic approach is particularly relevant when considering the needs of urban centres, as highlighted during this morning’s interactive panel discussion on, “The Role of Parliaments, Cities and Local Authorities in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda”.

City authorities have a vital role to play in the provision of basic social services that directly impact the daily lives of citizens. Ensuring that basic needs, such as those related to health, education, water and sanitation are met will be instrumental in ensuring we are able to meet our sustainable development objectives.

Cities also play an important part in implementing governance and financing frameworks. This critical role will also help ensure our societies are on a path towards sustainable development by shaping the implementation of policies at the local level.

Excellencies,

2015 represents a historic opportunity to change our world for the better. Negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda are underway. We are preparing for this summer’s Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in Addis Ababa. We are also working toward a new international agreement on climate change ahead of COP21, scheduled to take place this December in Paris.

The challenges of urbanization will also continue to figure prominently on the international community’s agenda, capped off with the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), scheduled to take place in Quito, Ecuador, in October

2016. Our discussions will aim to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization through a “New Urban Agenda”.

In a rapidly urbanizing world, it is essential that we focus on the future of our cities and proactively identify ways to improve the lives of urban dwellers, while also protecting the planet. This is a critical task that will influence our development path, both now and for generations to come.

I thank you for your kind attention.