

**ISOCARP Statement for Habitat III Asia Pacific Regional Meeting
17 March 2016, Prague**

*Delivered by Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, Vice President ISOCARP and
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Excellencies:

The International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), which also co-leads the World Urban Campaign and the General Assembly of Partners towards Habitat III, would like to express its appreciation towards the Govt of the Czech Republic and the Habitat III secretariat for a successful hosting of this regional meeting towards H-III.

This meeting carries enormous significance as it brings together countries which together represent nearly 50% of the global population. The urban challenges faced by this region include issues of poverty and inequality, inadequate housing and homelessness, the growing impacts of climate change, falling employment, ageing city populations and shrinking city centres. In this context, I would like to flag three key issues for your consideration:

1. The imperative of addressing issues of migration, especially forced migration leading to high numbers of refugees and displaced persons, is an important challenge facing this region, but often the elephant in the room which no one wants to recognise. It is also an illustration of the globalized, interconnected world we live in, where the source of the problem may lie outside the borders of the region where its impact is most heavily felt. This requires innovative political, economic, governance and physical-environmental solutions at different levels.
2. The exclusion of not only migrants, but also women, children and youth, and other marginalized groups, from development processes and their outcomes, prevents them from reaping the full benefits of urbanisation. Stakeholder needs and priorities, particularly gender perspectives and those from vulnerable groups of all ages, must be integrated into the formulation and strengthening of urban plans, policies and practices, as well as regulations and financing arrangements.
3. The spatial quality of cities and territories of the future should reflect compactness, connectivity, mixed use, integration of housing and services, affordability, adequate and quality public and green space, and socially diverse neighborhoods. Urban renewal must be inclusive and equitable, and must always aim to avoid negative socio-economic impacts such as the privatization of public commons as well as displacement.

These are only some of the priorities that must find a place in the New Urban Agenda and its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen:

From the perspective of ISOCARP, the reform of urban and spatial planning systems, including planning legislation, policy, process and capacity, as well as their link with wider national development planning, is of critical importance in this region. ISOCARP would like to call upon national governments to develop progressive national urban policy frameworks, underpinned by universal values, for instance those articulated in the recently adopted International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, which we as ISOCARP have supported and championed.

We urge governments, both national and sub-national, to recognize the role of urban and territorial planning as not only a technical tool, or a set of technical tools, but as a fundamental instrument of governance, a political mechanism to guide the responsive and equitable distribution of resources. At the same time, local authorities and civil society organisations should join hands to form effective multi-stakeholder planning agreements, which include implementation, monitoring and review, for achieving sustainable and inclusive urban development. Planning is one of the SDG11 indicators, and will indeed be central to realizing the SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda. The planning profession stands ready to take up this responsibility within the new urban paradigm that we are collectively pursuing.

Excellencies:

Building on many best practices in this region, we would like to stress upon the need for systemic change, including legislative and policy reform, an improved horizontal and vertical coordination, and a genuine commitment to partnership.

We believe that implementation of the New Urban Agenda, while being led by member states, should be a collective responsibility of all stakeholder groups. ISOCARP and the General Assembly of Partners proposes the establishment of a Global Urban Partners' Platform for Sustainable Urban Development, to support and facilitate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

This platform will take advantage of the intellectual and social capital created by the preparatory processes for Habitat 3, operating in four areas critical to sustainable urban development: knowledge, advocacy, experimentation and monitoring. It would aim to:

1. Encourage and promote evidence based policy making;
2. Develop, channel, and advocate shared priorities;
3. Advance and evaluate pilot programs organized by multiple partners; and
4. Monitor the local implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

ISOCARP, which represents the voice of planning professionals worldwide, stands committed and ready to support and facilitate this process, not only in Europe and North America where we have our strongest presence, but also globally.

I thank you for your attention.