

A Statement on Behalf of
A.B. Tcherny
Minister of Architecture and Construction of the Republic of Belarus

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Executive Secretary,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In October 2015, the United Nations – which was co-founded by the Republic of Belarus – celebrated its 70th anniversary. Today, the UN and its regional departments play a key role in solving problems of sustainable socio-economic development in different parts of the world.

The UNECE contributed to the coordination of international cooperation for the achievement of sustainable urban planning and access to affordable adequate housing through the development and implementation of the programme strategic documents, the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014-2020, and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing.

Belarus develops housing policy and state regulation of urban planning in an integrated manner. This provides an assessment of the natural, economic and environmental potential of the territory, and is an opportunity to explore the most effective way to develop it.

In 2015, Belarus has produced the following priority documents in the field of development of settlements and territories: "The Main Directions of the State Spatial Policy for 2016-2020", and the General Scheme of Complex Territorial Organization of the Republic of Belarus for the Period up to 2020 (National Plan). These documents are now awaiting approval by the President.

The aim of the State Spatial Policy is the development and maintenance of a favorable living environment through the effective use of resources in regions and cities.

The main priorities of the Policy tie in with the goals of sustainable development in cities and the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy framework document, including:

- the improvement of the efficiency and stability of the socio-economic development of regions;
- the provision of the ecological safety and integrated development of the living environment in settlements;

- the improvement of regional and municipal utilities and transport services;
- the conservation and rational use of historical-cultural heritage during the process of development of the architectural-planning structure of settlements.

In recent years, the Republic of Belarus has entered an era of innovative transformation of cities. The first step towards changing the existing approach to the spatial planning of cities was to create a new urban area module - an alternative look at the traditional system of micro district planning.

The main purposes for developing this module are: more comfortable living conditions in low-rise buildings and more green spaces; compactness of the social infrastructure; proximity to places of work; and development of private initiative and entrepreneurship. The residential area module will be built in the city of Brest.

One of the most visible and important indicators of the social and economic policy of the State is housing construction. Despite the economic crisis, the country's leaders remain focused on it.

By the end of 2014, 583 new square meters per thousand inhabitants were built. The average housing area per person was 26.1m², which is 1.5m² more than in 2010. This is expected to grow to 27.9m² by 2020, taking into account the simultaneous growth of the population.

Next year completes the implementation of the Concept of the State Housing Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2016. The Policy aims to maintain high rates of housing construction, and simultaneously modernize the construction and building materials industries. It also aims to improve the affordability of housing, with the help of funds from the State, organizations, personal savings and foreign investment.

Belarus has established a new type of housing - state rental housing stock. It is also developing an individual housing construction sector and is expanding the construction of housing under State order. In the commercial sector, the construction of energy-efficient housing is predominant. The Government supports citizens who are entitled to the improvement of their living conditions, and provides targeted support for families. All these measures increase the overall availability of housing.

A new housing financing instrument - housing construction savings - is being legislated. Belarusians now have the right to use their current real estate as collateral for new housing.

Belarus has been taking a new direction in urban planning - the creation of satellite towns near the capital, Minsk, and regional centers. Eight such satellite towns have been identified, and three – Smolevichi, Zhabinka, Skidel – have already start to build new housing.

More, better-quality multi-housing apartment blocks are being built to a higher standard of energy efficiency. In 2015, energy-efficient multi-storey housing will account for 60% of total housing construction. In the next 2 - 3 years, it is planned to build all new homes to these requirements.

Based on the experience of the implementation of the Concept of State Housing Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2016, the Government developed the new Concept of State Housing Policy for the coming period until 2020.

Belarus is open to studying international experience in the field of urban planning and housing, and is ready to make positive changes in these areas, as stated during the conversations in Minsk on 15 October 2015 with Mr. Marco Keiner, Acting Director, Forests, Land and Housing Division, UNECE, and Ms. Gulnara Roll, Head, Housing and Land Management Unit, UNECE.

After the development of the Country Profile on the Housing Sector in 2007-2009 with the participation of the UNECE and UN-HABITAT, a seminar on affordable housing took place with representatives of the CIS countries in Belarus in March 2011.

To coordinate the CIS countries' preparations for the World Summit on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) in 2016, the city of Minsk, with the support of the Human Settlements Programme UN-HABITAT, set up a methodological center in the State Institute for Regional and Urban Planning.

On 16 October 2015, this center held a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, during which, besides the main agenda, the representatives of various countries visited the sights and main attractions of urban development in Minsk.

After negotiations with the representatives of the UNECE, the main perspective directions of joint cooperation were adopted, in particular:

- the participation of Belarus in the "Smart city" project;
- the study of the European experience in energy-efficient housing;
- the examination of the European experience of the functioning of the social rental housing system;
- the study of various State-support mechanisms for low-income citizens for the construction, reconstruction and purchase of housing.

It was also agreed to update the housing sector of the Belarus Country Profile, taking into account actual achievements in the fields of energy-efficient housing and urban development. However, due to the UNECE's workload elaborating country profiles in other countries, and the upcoming transformations in the State and local government, it was decided to postpone this until after 2016.

The Ministry of Architecture and Construction highly appreciates the UNECE's cooperation with Belarus. We are also looking for further partnership in priority areas, and are ready to provide a methodological center for training courses, seminars, conferences and other events, with the participation of CIS countries and other countries of the region, for questions on sustainable, affordable, energy-efficient housing and urban development.

In conclusion, allow me to note the open and constructive nature of the activities of the UNECE, the leading regional economic organization of the United Nations, and to thank the organizers for the opportunity to speak here at the 76th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management. I wish them every success in achieving the goals of adequate housing for all and in improving the quality of life of people in cities and other human settlements on the European continent and beyond it.

Thank you for your attention.