

STATEMENT

By Mr. Nicolaas Beets, Special Dutch Urban Envoy

to be delivered at the

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Roundtable II: Sustainable Urban Development Strategies

Dear Madam Secretary, honored guests and speakers, dear colleagues,

My name is Nicolaas Beets, and I am the Special Dutch Urban Envoy. Since 2015, it has been my task to establish, support and bring forward the Urban Agenda for the EU.

It is a true honour and a privilege to be here on the birthday party of this distinguished Committee, which over the years has achieved so much in the way of Housing and Land Management. I only have to mention the establishment of the Geneva Charter for Affordable and Sustainable Housing in 2015, under the inspiring leadership of the invaluable Elena Szolgayová. The Netherlands has actively participated during its establishment and agrees on the principles and goals.

I was asked to focus on 'achievement, challenge or cooperation'.

I already briefly mentioned the achievement: on 30 May 2016, the Urban Agenda for the EU was established with the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam, during the then Dutch Presidency of the EU. After nearly 15 years of preparation, a broad coalition of Member States, the European Commission, representatives of EU cities and regions and a variety of experts and stakeholders agreed on a new way of cooperation. The aim is to foster the interests of cities in the EU.

The Urban Agenda meets a fundamental urban challenge: how can EU policy, funding and legislation be set up or adopted to address cities' needs and opportunities in the most effective way?

In the Urban Agenda, we do this through a unique form of multi-level cooperation. All parties - from small towns to the European Commission - are at the table, *on equal footing*.

In 12 thematic Partnerships, concrete solutions for challenges on urban regulation, funding and knowledge will - and already have been - proposed. It is also important to note that the Pact of Amsterdam is an *informal* agreement, which allows for a flexible, pragmatic and less administrative way of working together. I sometimes joke that we smuggled the Dutch 'polder model' into EU Urban decision making.

Today, we talk about Sustainable Urban Development. It is one of the cornerstones of the Urban Agenda, reflected in the Partnerships on Air Quality, Affordable Housing, Climate Adaptation, Energy Transition, Urban Mobility and Sustainable Land Use, to name but a few.

At the Habitat III conference In Quito, last year, I was proud to see the Urban Agenda for the EU being presented as Europe's key instrument for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals to the cities. Since then, we have moved on and learned, and I am now more than ever convinced that the Urban Agenda Method is a best practice that can be a very useful contribution to the sustainability of the worlds' cities and the well-being of its citizens.

I thank you for your time.
