

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Madam Chair

Thank you for inviting me to address you today to reflect on the establishment and delivery of ***Place and Life: the 2030 Regional Action Plan for the ECE***.

May I begin by complementing the Committee on the impressive body of work, that has been assembled by the Secretariat over the last decade. The ***Geneva UN Charter on Affordable and Sustainable Housing*** has proved to be a seminal piece of work that has informed and supported policy and practice globally, across the region, within member states and their regions and cities.

The Charter is a clear, forthright and principled document that has proven to be straightforward in use, flexible to apply and, as a result, has enabled dynamic action across the Region. Aligned as it is with ***Agenda 2030 Transforming our World***, the ***Charter*** has provided a robust foundation for action in housing in the face of global challenges such as the financial crash, the climate emergency and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The assembly of sound research and good practice by member states, cities, professional actors and international bodies has encouraged a culture of common cause and supported agile and prescient action whenever and wherever requested.

The alignment between ***Agenda 2030*** and the ***Geneva UN Charter*** has been reinforced by the Secretary General's ***Comprehensive Response to COVID-19***, by ***Cities and Pandemics*** from UN-Habitat, and the ***#Housing 2030 Research: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region***.

Implementation of the Charter's principles has been paralleled by action on the ground through an on-going sequence of ***UNECE City Living conferences*** in a range of host cities including Vienna, Prague, Glasgow, Helsinki, Madrid and Tirana, this has continued the momentum of the work and generated messages of support to the Committee for your leadership and commitment.

All this work provided the platform upon which to build the ***Regional Action Plan 2030*** that has integrated the complementary and overlapping aims of Agenda 2030, the Charter and ***#Housing 2030*** into an aligned programme for action research and delivery through two sets of policy principles:

Firstly: ***Cities, Neighbourhoods, Homes and Rural Life*** are focused on integrated systemic action at sub-national, regional, city-wide and neighbourhood level;

And secondly: ***Sustainable Housing and Homes*** that build on the four pillars of ***Housing 2030: Governance, Finance, Land and Climate-neutrality*** with more granular action for delivery.

The Plan, its policies, goals and targets are founded on the Secretary General's call to intensify commitment and action in:

- 1) Tackling inequalities and development deficiencies;
- 2) Strengthening the capacities of local actors; and
- 3) Pursuing a green, resilient and inclusive economic recovery.

The Plan's ambitious and far-reaching objectives encourages action

- For strategic policy development and implementation to help shape systems that promote access to adequate and affordable housing;
- For building capacity within and between Member States ***and*** within and between networks of cities to establish programmes for design and implementation; and
- For communicating research outcomes, documentation and dissemination of best-practice through networks ... of governmental agencies, cities, private stakeholders and academia aided by UNECE's own ***Charter Centres of Excellence*** and the ***Real Estate Management Group*** that can bring peer-to-peer review and recognition for excellence in practice.

Implementation and delivery of the Regional Action Plan will help sustain the momentum of the Committee's work by continuing to offer coordinated and accessible support to member states through assembly and dissemination of best practice and be a valued tool to member states and to cities through the ***Forum of Mayors***

This then is a call to action:

1. To support and record the individual actions of member states and their cities particularly through bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation;
2. To build and disseminate the evidence base through a library of best practice case studies;
3. To develop flexible 'toolkits' for action that can be deployed within different legal jurisdictions and land management systems;
4. To provide a readily accessible and interactive online platform with a downloadable library; and
5. To establish an annual forum on progress, perhaps positioned at the mid-point of the Committee's annual cycle, through the leadership of the Forum of Mayors, the Centres of Excellence network and the Real Estate Management Group working with different host cities.

The intent is therefore to build a continuous, open, constructive and consensus-driven evidence base and dialogue for delivery of the **Regional Action Plan** – to influence the global narrative, to recognise how, why and where we do things well and how we can do better in order to establish a shared platform for cities and their communities based on better health, environmental, social, economic and above all, climate outcomes.

Tomorrow you will hear from the **Centres of Excellence network** and the **Real estate Management Group** who will share momentum and purpose around the Regional Action Plan. Next, however, you will hear from a panel of experts and thought leaders, from member states, international agencies and cities who will reflect on their interaction with the Committee Secretariat, the charter and the regional action plan identifying the challenges and opportunities they face, their facility to network and share best practice to continue to build momentum in the delivery of the regional action plan.

We live in a time of climate emergency where the human habitat and the home is to the fore in what the Secretary General has described as the battle for assertive climate action that will be won or lost in cities. The imperative and urgency for action and for delivery of the principles, goals and targets of the Regional Action Plan has never been greater.

I wish you fruitful discussions, a successful Committee and a redoubled sense of purpose in the delivery of **Place and Life: the 2030 Regional Action Plan for the ECE**. Thank you.