

## **Statement to the dialogue session 6 Sustainable Urbanization: Cities in a Changing Climate**

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Over one billion people around the world are undernourished because they lack easy and regular access to affordable food. Climate change further affects food security both in the short-term, through weather variability and extreme weather events, and in the long-term through changing temperature and precipitation patterns. Poor communities living in urban areas are usually particularly vulnerable as their livelihoods and economic activities are most exposed.

Cities that currently experience heat waves are expected to be stressed further from the combined effects of likely water shortages and altered spatial distribution of some infectious diseases. Cities are increasingly vulnerable to flash floods, hurricanes, dust storms, fire risk, pests and parasites and improper sanitation due to altered land use and rapid expansion. Frequent and prolonged floods and droughts may pose further challenges to water quality and health. Coastal cities are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and sea level rise because of their precarious location and unique geographical features.

With prospects for 70% of all people living in cities by 2050, the demand for food increases and new transport and market infrastructure, facilities and services are needed. Food supply and distribution systems to cities will need to adapt to climate change but also to new repartitions between urban and rural populations.

As the locus of vulnerable populations and the hub of economic activities that emit greenhouse gases, cities occupy a prominent place in the climate change debate. City leaders are increasingly aware of the need to enhance resilience to climate change impacts and to cut carbon emissions, while ensuring the right to food of urban populations. The "right to the city" which addresses social inequality, spatial segregation and inadequate housing should be properly addressed in pursuit of sustainable urban development.

The task of feeding the world's cities adequately constitutes an increasing challenge under a changing climate. Mayors and urban planners should therefore ensure coordination of food producers, transporters, market operators and retail sellers. Urban food security should be placed high on the agenda of all strategies to reduce vulnerability and risks associated with climate change impacts. Promoting urban and peri-urban agriculture, enhancing tree cover with appropriate species around the cities adds to vulnerability reduction, employment creation and carbon sequestration.

Urban planning, policies and programmes must consider natural resources management in urban and peri-urban areas and incorporate food security, food safety and nutrition to help city-dwellers attain a healthy life under changing climate. As cities eventually drive and support rural development, urban-rural linkages should be the key dimension of livelihood development and planning and thus enable city authorities and local governments to broaden their strategy towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).