

Ladies and gentlemen

Nowadays, towns and large cities play an important role when it comes to implementing international agreements.

Slide 2

When the Governing Mayor of Berlin, in his capacity as Co-President of the global network of cities METROPOLIS, agreed in June 2014 to take on the function of HABITAT spokesperson for METROPOLIS vis-à-vis the United Nations, no-one could have foreseen the impetus that the various initiatives of METROPOLIS would develop on the way to the global summit meeting on human settlements in Quito.

Together with 16 METROPOLIS cities from five continents, we drew up the first METROPOLIS Declaration on HABITAT III and launched the PrepCity initiative in May 2015. Cities from all over the world became involved in this initiative and prepared intensively for HABITAT III. In this way, they were part of the entire process that led them along the way to Quito. Under Berlin's leadership, we held four international conferences in Buenos Aires, Mexico and Berlin. The concluding conference was the German Habitat Forum in Berlin at the beginning of June 2016, at which the "Berlin Recommendations" for the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations were passed.

It is important to Berlin that towns and cities were given a hearing and that they were seen by the United Nations as actors. Indeed, the key message of the Governing Mayor of Berlin when he spoke at the global summit meeting on human settlements in Quito was: "Make cities actors

in the HABITAT process. A sustainable and achievable settlement policy must be developed *with cities* – not just *for cities!*”

The PrepCity initiative, which was instigated by Berlin, successfully contributed to the fact that, with the New Urban Agenda, cities will become important actors over the next 20 years when it comes to making sustainable improvements to the quality of life of urban populations, finding solutions to the provision of decent housing and strengthening inclusion and social cohesion in societies characterised by immigration.

Slide 3

If we look at the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the key tool for the implementation of which is now the New Urban Agenda, we find a reference to “**inclusive** and resilient cities” in Goal 11. As a declaration of intent, the New Urban Agenda must now find ways of being implemented, of coming alive. Where, if not in cities, which present themselves as self-confident pioneers of inclusion?

Maintaining a good quality of life, giving all citizens opportunities, enabling them to participate in society and, in so doing, creating the social cohesion that makes it possible for people to live together successfully requires that the process of urbanisation is designed intelligently and sustainably and that proper regard is paid to the principles of “**Design for all**”. **So, what does it mean if we have to think holistically about planning, manufacturing or construction?**

Every intelligible announcement at a station, every step whose edge can be clearly seen, every lowered kerbstone and every official document that can be understood without difficulty is a step on the way to inclusion.

We want to continue to change public spaces and buildings in such a way that they can be used independently, that they are attractive, practical and inviting. We want to remove obstacles – right at the planning stage. But not just in the construction and transport sectors. We want to remove barriers in the minds of well-meaning people who simply need to know more. Such people can be teachers, professors and students, but also bus drivers, hotel managers or tourism experts. Our efforts are directed at all of them. Anyone who gets involved with this topic, soon realises that the removal of barriers demands creativity but also inspires it.

Slide 4

Ladies and gentlemen, every city goes its own way in these questions. And no two ways are the same. So, we should be careful not to look for an ideal solution that solves the problem for everyone. Because such a solution doesn't exist. However, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda make it clear what is important here, namely the question as to whether cities provide all their citizens access to basic services and amenities or not. This includes education, housing, public transport and a healthy living environment for all. An important task in all of this is to make cities **barrier-free** and, therefore, **accessible**.

Accessibility and inclusion are two sides of the same coin and are mutually dependent. To make it possible for inclusion to succeed, the

Berlin Senate decided in 2015 on “Details about the 10 guidelines on the disability policy of the federal state of Berlin for the sustainable implementation of the **UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities** by 2020”. This declaration was accompanied by numerous measures.

Slide 5

But sustainable urban development must also provide answers to the challenges of demographic change and an ageing society. The question as to how we can support the growing number of elderly people in such a way that they can remain in the surroundings that are familiar to them for as long as possible and live their lives in dignity requires careful thought when it comes to planning and designing residential neighbourhoods. Helping people to identify with their neighbourhood and looking holistically at the entire living environment of residents – from housing to coping with everyday life, to free time, education, old age care and inter-generational exchange – are things that have to be taken into consideration. It is for this reason that integrated and socially and culturally diverse neighbourhoods are also inter-generational in nature.

Slide 6

Our mobility programme makes funds available for lowering kerbs and designing crossings to be safe and pedestrian-friendly. This improves everyone’s quality of life in the city but is of particular benefit to wheelchair-users and makes it easier for people to use a walking frame. Every year, 4 new underground stations in Berlin are equipped with lifts. Berlin aims to make all its underground stations barrier free by 2020. The

entire bus fleet of Berlin Transport can already be used by all passengers.

Slides 7-8

To achieve the goals of the New Urban Agenda, we also need to exchange ideas and experience beyond our national boundaries. As early as in 2010 and at Berlin's instigation in EURO CITIES, the largest network of cities in Europe, we founded the working group "Barrier-free City for All", where we will be holding intensive discussions about the topics of mobility and sustainable urban development in the coming years.

This also means that we don't work on individual problems that are divided according to topic areas. We want to avoid such compartmentalised thinking and, taking our lead from the New Urban Agenda, develop integrated, holistic solutions. In answer to the question that is often put: "Is all of this affordable?", I would like to say that I am convinced that socially just solutions are never far from solutions that make good economic sense. And this is my understanding of a "barrier-free city for all".

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to discussing these matters with you later.