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**Commission on Population and Development
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**“Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and
development”**

Statement on behalf of the European Union by

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Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

Please allow me to congratulate you and all the other members of the Bureau on your election. I would like to assure you that the European Union looks forward to working towards a positive and constructive outcome of the 41st Session of the Commission on Population and Development. The *Programme of Action* of the ICPD and the *Key Actions for Further Implementation of the Programme of Action* provide the guidelines for the work of the Commission. The EU reaffirms its support and commitment to their full implementation.

This session will focus on Chapter IX of the ICPD Programme of Action "Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development". Improving the urban and rural environments and the lives of people, especially the youth, is a vital and necessary step in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The EU recognizes that, despite progress achieved, the situation in developing countries requires continued attention and action, embracing issues such as social inclusion, access to services by vulnerable groups and development cooperation. The EU therefore believes that although the links between the four dimensions we address today are complex, they can – if managed efficiently – provide us with better tools to create sustainable human settlements.

1. Urbanization is a sign of modernization, industrialization and migration to large cities. It is a process by which a large number of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. The cities' growth differs from region to region; nevertheless, urban population has been increasing constantly since 1920 in all regions of the world, and especially in Europe. Over 60 per cent of the European population lives in urban areas with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Urbanization has been driven by the concentration of investment and employment opportunities. All over the World, urbanization is an integral part of economic and social development, if rapid and unregulated, it can have adverse consequences for populations by straining the existing urban infra-structure and services and consequently higher rates of urban poverty and environmental degradation.
2. One of the challenges faced by European cities is youth unemployment. With an unemployment rate of 18.6 per cent among young people under 25 years of age, cities have to compensate for enormous fluctuations. Here, the urban development policy also has to provide solutions to tackle social exclusion and isolation in individual neighbourhoods. Long-term and stable economic growth will not be possible unless cities remain socially balanced and stable. We have

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

to devote even more attention to the educational and other needs and rights of children and young people in these urban areas.

To meet these challenges, a wide variety of policy responses has already been developed or is being envisaged by the EU and its Member States. In March 2005, the European Council adopted "The European Youth Pact". Its aim is to improve education, training, mobility, employment and social inclusion of young people, including local and regional strategies for social and professional inclusion, whilst helping to achieve a work-life balance. The EU Programme "Youth in Action 2007-2013" is one of various tools to reach young people in all 27 EU Member States and to promote youth mobility and intercultural learning experiences beyond borders. The guiding principles of the URBAN programme have been integrated into the objectives of convergence and regional competitiveness and employment. The EU and its Member States are taking the specific characteristics of the urban areas into account to a greater extent. With URBACT (Integrated Urban Development Transnational Exchange Programme) the EU has been contributing to the improvement of actions carried out at local and regional levels. The programme, financed by the European Union, concerns mainly cities and those areas which are characterized by an increasing level of unemployment, delinquency and poverty and by the insufficient presence of public services. By transnational exchanges between European cities and actors, the European Union contributes to finding the most efficient solutions to common problems. Efficient structures for exchange of experiences and knowledge is required for all engaged to set better priorities. Men and women's engagement in debate, decision-making processes and elections is a key factor to a successful development.

3. Cities around the world have increasingly been recognized as key players in the globalization process. The recently published 2007 United Nations Report on the development of the world's population comes to both gloomy and encouraging conclusions. The world will be predominantly urban already in 2008; the population will continue to grow most rapidly in the developing countries, and this urban growth will stem mostly from natural growth (more birth than death) rather than migration. It is therefore necessary for governments to ensure long-term investment in sexual and reproductive health, family planning and the empowerment of women and girls. Urban growth, if ill-planned and ill-governed, will be pushing rates of poverty and misery to higher levels. At the same time, cities offer the greatest opportunities to tackle and solve the growing problems in the world. By 2030, more than 5 billion people – about 60 per cent of the global population – will live in cities, 81 per cent of which in the mega-cities of the developing countries. However, at the moment more than half of the urban population lives in cities of 500 000 or less. Urban problems are, in principle, easier for smaller cities to solve but have not been addressed. On the other hand, in cities of 100 000 or fewer many urban people, especially women, are not better off than poor rural people.
4. The urbanization of the world can neither be prevented nor stopped. The key concern is to make the best of it for humankind. Proactive urban governance including regulation of land supply and minimal services such as secure tenure, water, sanitation, waste disposal and power are important taking note

of both the anticipated future growth of the cities and their present needs. Urban areas in developing countries are also environments in which women and young people are made more vulnerable to violence, abuse and deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Poverty in urban slums is also a major factor that forces people into the sex industry, a major driving force of HIV-transmission. The demand of the city dwellers for housing, schools, jobs and health facilities, including family planning and access to sexual and reproductive health, will increase and has to be met, especially for vulnerable groups such as poor women, the elderly and children, especially girls. At the same time, migration to urban centres should not be prevented, as it is now clear, and historical evidence in Europe shows, that urbanization can in the long term contribute to reducing poverty. In this regard, it can also help to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

5. The EU fully endorses the view that employment is a key route out of poverty. At the world level, the rate of growth of the urban poor (those living on no more than 1 dollar a day) has surpassed that of the urban population at large. Large urban areas play a crucial role in contributing to the Lisbon Agenda. They are crucial to achieving the main Lisbon objectives. This is also highlighted in the European Commission's Communication of October 2007, "Modernizing Social Protection for Greater Social Justice and Economic Cohesion", which combines three key elements: adequate income support, access to inclusive labour markets and quality social services. The full involvement of public authorities at all levels – including, and crucially, at the regional and local level – is a key to successfully implementing this approach. EU financial instruments, such as the European Social Fund – which invests over EUR 10 billion a year in people – are also available to support the active inclusion approach or the integration of deprived neighbourhoods and vulnerable groups in urban areas.

Mr Chairperson,

6. The year 2008 marks a defining moment in terms of human settlements and in human history, as for the first time, the number of urban dwellers will equal the number of rural dwellers. This unprecedented shift of the world population from rural to urban highlights the important role of the international community – and in the UN system in particular UN-Habitat - in assisting states to reach the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the targets of: halving the proportion of people lacking access to improved sanitation between 1990 and 2015; slum upgrading and prevention, with a view to reducing urban poverty; and to promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable urban areas.
7. Because such a large number of urban slum dwellers are under the age of 25 it is important to involve and empower young people. The prevalence of HIV has been reported to be higher in urban than rural areas with young women and girls being most susceptible to HIV infection. There is, therefore, a strong need for prevention, treatment and care services and voluntary counselling and testing in urban areas.
8. Acknowledging that the attainment of the objectives of the Programme of Action of ICPD and consequently Millennium Development Goals, will depend

to a significant extent on the ability of the International Community to achieve the objective of sustainable cities. The EU agreed, in May 2007, on the "Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities" to strengthen inner cities. The Charter calls for a greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches and emphasize the importance of systematic and structured exchange of experiences and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development. Living in cities is becoming increasingly popular. Families are returning from the urban fringe and rural hinterland to the inner cities. Urbanity is becoming a hallmark of quality. In short: Europe's cities are currently experiencing a renaissance, and policymakers have to shape this renaissance. The Slovenian EU Presidency has included these messages in the preparations for the 2008 Spring European Council. We find it important to stress the role of territorial diversity in implementing the Lisbon Strategy goals, and in that, the importance of the territorial dimension of sectoral policies, as well as the contribution of cities and urban areas to the competitiveness of the European territory.

9. However, we can not address the challenges of urbanization in isolation from rural developments such as labour migration or population ageing. Rural poverty, in particular in developing countries, needs to be effectively addressed as a root cause for mass rural-urban migration that challenges well-managed processes of urbanization. On this basis, the European Union is in favour of giving priority to the improvement of service delivery not only to the urban poor and to the inhabitants of small cities but also to rural areas. Strategies for rural poverty reduction must address the whole range of problems and take due account of the diversity of rural areas and population groups, as well as the changing context of rural poverty. In this context universal access to education and health care services is of utmost importance.
10. The European Union believes that the Africa-EU Joint Strategy and its First Action Plan are important tools to address all these challenges as they identify concrete measures regarding environment, civil society participation, gender equality, improving access to water resources and agricultural productivity, reducing malnutrition, improving access to health services and information, including family planning as well as prevention, treatment, care and support services for HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis and sexual and reproductive health, thus constituting an important factor in achieving the MDG's by 2015.

Mr Chairperson,

In concluding my statement, I would like to highlight how important it is for States to redouble their efforts towards an efficient management of links between population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development, so that their potential to support the achievement of the MDG's can become a reality. However, in order to solve problems, constant cooperation and dialogue within the UN framework is as vital as the country policy responses. In this context, the European Union will work towards a positive and constructive outcome of this session.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.