

**Vice-President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Jerry Matthews Matjila
Permanent representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations**

Opening Remarks

**High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Breakout session on SDG 11 – Cities

19 November, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to speak to you here in Doha, which was chosen as one of the New7Wonders Cities in a recent Internet based poll. Doha is also a city with over 1 million citizens. This is very much relevant to the topic of this session as more than half of the world's population lives in cities now and almost half of those citizens live in cities with at least 1 million inhabitants. Moreover, by 2030 the number of cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants is projected to grow to 559, and 6 out of 10 people will live in cities.

We live in rapidly changing times and technologies and urbanization is a part of this process that probably creates as many opportunities as challenges. The latter require specific consideration, and I want to bring some of them to your attention.

First of all, as more people migrate to cities in search of a better life and urban populations grow, housing issues intensify. Globally, more than 880 million people were living in slums in 2014. Second, managing solid waste is often problematic in densely populated areas. In fact, in many developing regions, less than half of solid waste is safely disposed of. Third, urban air pollution also challenged cities around the world, causing illness and millions of premature deaths annually. In 2014, around half of the global urban population was exposed to air pollution levels at least 2.5 times higher than maximum standards set by the WHO. Next, there are many problems created by unplanned urban sprawls, like increased hazardous pollution and dioxide emissions, and we can continue to enumerate issues that require urgent action in relation to urbanization.

Technological solutions can help address the problems mentioned above. But in order to be scaled up and have an effect, they require financing. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in paragraph 34, acknowledges that “expenditures and investments in sustainable development are being devolved to the sub-national level, which often lack adequate technical and technological capacity, financing and support”.

I want to give an example that is also relevant for another parallel session on SDG 7, sustainable energy. We understand that in order to be sustainable, urban development has to be energy efficient. Grids, energy efficient buildings, energy supply systems, transport and the behavior of citizens will need to lead to considerable energy savings and greenhouse gas reductions.

In this respect, private funding is vital, but cannot be enough to support the large-scale and to some extent radical transformation in energy use and other areas, so it must be leveraged by innovative financial mechanisms. These mechanisms should become part of strategic planning, integrated municipal departments and procurement processes. It is important to note that many cities, especially in the poorest countries, require capacity building in this context.

In order to be efficient, financing of technological solutions should be integrated and systematic, and I expect this session to shed some light on the importance of this topic, gaps and challenges and available solutions.

I am pleased to introduce the moderator of this session, Dr. Allan Wain, Professor of Harvard Law School. Professor, the floor is yours.