**Delegation from                                                                                                     Represented by the**

***The Republic of Iraq                                                                                 University of Heidelberg***

***Position Paper for the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)***

The Republic of Iraq stresses the importance of the following issues: Building Resilient cities to Promote Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); Realizing the Right to Adequate Shelter through the New Urban Agenda; and Inclusive Urbanization for the Promotion of Equality and Social Cohesion. Bearing in mind that 70 percent of the Iraqi people live in urban areas, comprising cities, which were founded about 5000 years ago, the Republic of Iraq is highly dedicated to attain a minimum standard of housing and sustainable urban development in order to be on equal terms with other Member States of the United Nations (UN).

**I. Building Resilient Cities to Promote Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction**

As a country that is highly affected by the impacts of assassinations and war, the Republic of Iraq could not yet focus adequately on the prevention of climate change and DRR*.* Nevertheless, Iraq is concerned about the current effects climate change and natural as well as man-made hazards have on cities. The Iraqi population has a high urban growth rate of three percent. Simultaneously, Iraqi cities are increasingly susceptible to multiple forms of natural and man-made hazards such as droughts, floods, desertification and earthquakes. Thus, Iraq is alarmed about its urban vulnerability and the lack of preparedness for those hazards, especially since Iraq is also affected by the negative impact of war. **Nationally,** Iraq initiated in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the *Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme* in 2014, which aims at providing first aid to rural areas affected by a natural hazard or assassination attack. **Regionally,** Iraq steadily implements its obligations under the *Aqaba Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction*, such as strengthening joint cooperation among Arab cities and towns to transfer knowledge and expertise to other municipalities and local governments. In this context, Iraq appreciates the progress made so far by all Member States of the Arab Region. **Internationally**, the Republic of Iraq acknowledges the fruitful efforts made by the *Global Collaboration for Urban Resilience,* an alliance of nine influential organizations such as the *100 Resilient Cities Project,* which raises international awareness to the issue of building resilient cities. On the one hand, this project has shown that there exists no one fits all approach when it comes to building resilient cities as every city has its unique geographical, climatic and traditional attributes. On the other hand, it has demonstrated the advantages of best practice sharing among Member States. Based on this observation, Iraq suggests the establishment of a worldwide exchange network in the **short-term**. This global platform should create conversations and establish relations, which enables cities to tailor the necessary actions to their needs, but also to cooperate closely in order to use their collective power to access partnership resources, including technical and financial support. Iraq proposes the supervision of the network by the United Nations Office For Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and encourages all Member States to participate voluntarily. Since poor communities and developing countries are often the most severely affected by the consequences of natural disasters, as stated in A/RES/67/231, the network should especially focus on supporting those areas. In the **medium-term**, Member States with further developed solutions in the field of DRR are asked to send volunteers to the most vulnerable areas in order to train and educate locals in efficiently building cheap resilient houses, all financially supported by UNISDR. These locals should assume the work in the **long-term** by benefiting from other cities knowledge and experience. **Finally,** thesepreventive actions for climate change and DRR will be more impactful, faster implemented, at lower costs and with fewer resources than any retroactive recovering action.

**II. Realizing the Right to Adequate Shelter through the New Urban Agenda**

The lack of adequate shelter throughout Iraq is a critical concern with regard to the more than 2.5 million internally displaced persons (IDP) that flee from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since 2014 the situation has aggravated due to the 250.000 Syrian refugees fleeing to Iraq, from which 62 percent reside in urban areas. While some displaced families managed to settle with friends and relatives, others have been forced to find shelter in unfinished buildings or informal settlements. As a consequence, approximately 800.000 people are in urgent need of emergency shelter assistance, and at least 940.000 lack basic household and other non-food items. Thus, guaranteeing the right to live in dignity, adequate shelter, which includes stable resilient buildings and serves as a basis for equality and social cohesion, is of utmost importance, as stated in Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Nationally,** Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are closely working together with theUNDPto coordinate the humanitarian response such as the 2015 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan accompanied by more than sixty UN and non-UN organizations that are engaged in providing protection and assistance, basic shelter, access to basic services and the implementation of specific protection interventions across all sectors for the benefit of refugees. **Regionally,** Iraq is supported by the UNDP’s *Local Area Development Programme,* which aims at strengthening local authorities to plan and manage reconstruction and development activities. Furthermore, the UNDP established the *Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization* in Iraq in order to assist areas recently liberated from the control of the ISIL. **Internationally,** Iraq did not only participate in the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), but has also adopted the *Istanbul Declaration,* which specially identified ten goals to manage urbanization as an opportunity for new development initiatives. Following this, the Republic of Iraq sees a strong demand to implement the right to adequate shelter as the main goal of the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA*)*. With most appreciative regards to all the efforts that have already been made by the UN, especially by the UNDP in cooperation with the Iraq, there is now the need to continue following the response plans with all possible forces in the **short-term**. In the **medium-term,** the UNDP and other organizations, which work on this issue, have to focus on the creation of availability of water, adequate sanitation, habitability, accessibility and cultural adequacy in a proper manner, so shelter becomes adequate and guarantees a live in dignity for every single Iraqi. Hence, in the **long-term** every single inhabitant should be provided with a home and infrastructure has to be extended in order to prevent negative impacts of war, ecological disasters and diseases. Since many Member States lack the necessary institutional strength, they are not able to reduce the effects of urban growth by spatial planning. Therefore, Iraq recommends providing help for the building of government offices, which are in charge of urban infrastructure planning and providing basic services like electricity, safe drinking water sources and access to a public sanitation network. **Finally**, as the basic needs of the Iraqi population are satisfied andIraqhas more institutional strength, the gap between international standards and the actual aims and efforts to fulfil these standards will be closed.

**III. Inclusive Urbanization for the Promotion of Equality and Social Cohesion**

Even though Iraq has historically always had a diverse society, made up of various ethnic and religious communities, it currently faces grave social tensions between host communities, IDPs and the residing refugees within its borders, which crucially impedes the promotion of social equality and cohesion. Exclusion due to religion, culture, nationality and age as well as the lack of equality, especially among women as stated by the *UN Women,* aggravates incoherence within the Iraqi society. Additionally, social cohesion is also forestalled by the lack of perceptiveness and capacity in the labor market, particularly for the Iraqi youth representing 60 percent of the Iraqi population. **Nationally,** the Republic of Iraq and the KRGhave led the development of the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2016-2017 (3RP) together with the UN as well as representatives of refugees and host communities to improve the situation of refugees and to prevent conflicts within the Iraqi population. Moreover,Iraqhas been working together with the NAMI Youth Advisor and Public Information Offices (PIO) and Friends of UNICEF, to consider the ideas of young people in the debate on inclusive urbanization. Iraq strongly acknowledges the efforts young volunteers bring towards achieving the new *SDG*s. **Regionally,** Iraq works together with the UNDP on *Promoting Social Cohesion in the Arab Region (PSCAR)* that aims to promote social cohesion by focusing on equal citizenship, trust among citizens as well as between citizen and the state, and pluralistic acceptance of the other, of different faith, ethnic background, and political ideology. **Internationally,** Iraq has actively worked on the *United Nations Assistance Development Framework for Iraq (2015-2019)* with the goal to build social cohesion and improve the lives of people in Iraq with a particular focus on the most vulnerable. According to the *United Nations Assistance Resolution 2010/12,* Iraq reaffirms the importance of promoting social integration with the aim of achieving an inclusive society for all, that is stable, safe and based on the protection of human rights as well as tolerance and the participation of all people. Therefore, recalling R/SC/2250, Iraq is eager to take further steps to increase the dialogue among IDPs, refugees and host communities especially focusing on youth and women. In the **short-term,** Iraq promotes the establishment of committees on a local level consisting of young IDPs, refugees, women and other social groups as well as social workers to collect their ideas on promoting social cohesion and to include their concerns into the decision-making process*.* In the **medium-term,** the Republic of Iraq vigorously promotes the establishment of education centers in each of the 19 Iraqi provinces to provide training of language and computer skills, as well as office etiquette, supervised by UNAMI. In corporation with these education centers, local entrepreneurs should voluntarily take sponsorship for young inhabitants of Iraq, to let them accompany one of their workers for a one-year period in order to facilitate their employment. In the **long-term** those sponsored IDPs, refugees and members of the local community should be included in the job market or should have gained enough knowledge to become entrepreneurs. The surplus of young unemployed people will be a chance, not an obstacle of finding solutions for many deficiencies in Iraq such as in the health care system, the provision of electricity or clear water supply. **Finally,** social cohesion should reach the point, where it’s defined as a general condition of stable coexistence within communities, when IDPs, refugees and host community members accept socio-ethnic differences, have equitable access to livelihoods and other communities resources, and feel safe and secure in their homes.