Mr Chairman

1 At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statements made by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China, and Myanmar on behalf of ASEAN on this agenda item. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the UN-Habitat.

Mr Chairman

2 On the occasion of World Habitat Day this year, the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Néstor Osorio said, “We often forget that compact cities, when sensitively planned and appropriately supported by sustainable infrastructure, constitute the world’s most efficient settlement pattern.”

In an increasingly resource-constrained world, we agree that efficiency must be a priority consideration when we think about how we build our cities. However, human settlements are not just about how we build them to become more efficient and organised. They must be about how we live and how we can improve the lives of those who inhabit them. Becoming more efficient and organised only makes sense when we live better as a result of it.

1 High-Level Discussion on Resilient Design for Sustainable Urbanisation, 4 October 2013.
Ensuring and maintaining liveability in a high-urban density setting has always been at the heart of Singapore’s approach to our development. This is because Singapore is a small city-state of only 700 square kilometres but with a population of more than 5 million. As a metropolis with no countryside, high urban density living is the only way of life. Though it is a commonly-held perception that high urban density living equates to a diminished quality of life, Singapore’s considerable urban and population density has not stopped us from building a highly liveable city. Our experience has led us to believe that, when sensitively planned and appropriately supported, compact cities can constitute some of the world’s most liveable settlement patterns.

Building a highly liveable city in Singapore has been possible because of a combination of careful governance over the last 50 years, as well as learning from the best practices of other cities. Our experience in this area has been distilled and compiled into a Liveability Framework. This Framework identifies three ‘outcomes’: first, a competitive economy; second, environmental sustainability; and third, a high quality of life. These outcomes can be achieved through two key ‘systems’: integrated planning and development, and dynamic urban governance. The integrated planning and development system is guided by five 'rules': long term thinking; inter-agencies’ cooperation; operational flexibility; effective and successful implementation; and systematic innovation. On the other hand, the dynamic urban governance system is underpinned by the following five rules: lead with vision and pragmatism; foster a culture of integrity; cultivate sound institutions; involve the communities; and work with markets.

Singapore believes that we can contribute to the elaboration of urbanisation in the context of the post-2015 development agenda as well as to the advancement of a sustainable development goal (SDG) on sustainable cities and human settlements through this Liveability Framework. Given our experience, Singapore strongly supports an SDG on sustainable cities and human settlements. In this regard, we will elaborate further on the Liveability Framework during the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs’ discussions on ‘sustainable cities and human settlements’ in January 2014.

Mr Chairman

Singapore’s strong advocacy for sustainable cities and sustainable urbanisation is underscored by our commitment to the Group of Friends for
Sustainable Cities, which we co-chair with Sweden. The Group of Friends for Sustainable Cities comprises 29 countries, spanning all the major regions. It will continue to organise and host events to advance the dialogue on sustainable cities and urbanisation issues, in the context of the SDGs and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

7 In addition, Singapore supports the convening of the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) in 2016. We see HABITAT III as a significant conference that will not only allow the international community to engage on pressing issues related to the Habitat agenda, including on the many challenges that continue to persist in the areas of housing and sustainable urban development, but also integrate the issue of sustainable urbanisation into the Habitat agenda. At this session of the General Assembly, we urge member states to focus their efforts on clarifying how best we can support the HABITAT III preparatory process at all levels. Singapore stands ready to work closely with all member states on this issue.

Mr Chairman

8 The theme of this session of the General Assembly is: “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage.” As we set the stage for the future we want in the post-2015 world and as we consider this important agenda item at this session, I would like to end my statement by recalling a comment made by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the Rio+20 conference in Rio de Janeiro last year. He said, “The road to global sustainability runs through the world’s cities and towns. By building more sustainable cities and regions, [we] will lead [ourselves] to a more sustainable world.”

9 With that, I thank you.

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