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PRESS RELEASE

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Sharing European cities' experience with the world: Commissioner Hahn attends World Urban Forum in Medellin

EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn travels to Latin America this weekend to participate in the most important meeting point of urban policymakers worldwide. Commissioner Hahn is representing the European Union at the high-profile event, where he will share the lessons learnt in Europe's cities when tackling the common global challenges of pollution, poverty, sustainable mobility and social equity. The invitation to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) event in Medellin, Columbia comes as Commissioner Hahn prepares to unveil a communication on a European Urban Agenda.

During his visit to the world's most urbanised continent, Commissioner Hahn will also be meeting key regional and central government figures who are active in sustainable development.

Commissioner Hahn said, "*Our future is increasingly urban, and the city level must take its place alongside the national and international levels of governance so that the urban dimension becomes an explicit priority for policy makers everywhere. A sustainable economic, social and environmental development globally can only be guaranteed if we get urbanisation right. For example how can we tackle climate change unless we get it right in our cities?*"

He added, "There is no one single model for well-functioning cities; but the common ingredients include: a commitment to equality of opportunity, job creation, boosting innovation and an efficient use of natural resources; also, a drive to improve the quality of life for young and old, men and women alike. We need a holistic approach to develop cities that people want to live in and our experience in Europe has shown that they are built on the foundations of good governance and democracy".

Commissioner Hahn attends the World Urban Forum on April 7-8. He will address the Ministerial Roundtable on Tuesday morning where about 80 ministers from around the world are expected to attend. (Speech to be published on RAPID 8/4)

Calls for a more concerted approach to policy making affecting cities have come from many international organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UN HABITAT as well as individual countries around the world. There is a global realisation that tackling our most pressing challenges - whether climate change mitigation, energy dependence or job creation, as well as growing the economy can only be done with the help of our towns and cities worldwide.

Since 2007 a number of formal, international Regional Policy cooperation dialogues with the EU have been launched - among them with Brazil, Chile, Argentina and most recently Peru last year. The European Commission also has cooperation agreements with China, Russia and Japan - all of which are confronted with wide regional disparities as well as major challenges in terms of co-ordinating the different levels of government and ensuring that decentralisation can be achieved without compromising efficiency.

Commissioner Hahn has championed the cause of cities throughout his time in office and has brought forward a reform of Regional Policy to emphasise sustainable urban development underpinned by strategic investments that deliver measurable results.

Background

The principle of multi-level governance underlying EU Regional Policy is of particular interest to many third countries who want to tackle uneven economic development and tap into the potential of their regions. For example sharing responsibility for management and financial control with the EU Member States and regions has helped develop the potential and strategic strengths of every region in Europe while at the same time ensuring investments are channelled into where they are most needed.

During the EU budget period 2014-2020 it is expected that half of the European Regional Development Fund investments will be made in cities and urban areas. As over two-thirds of Europeans live in urban areas, developing an "urban agenda" which cuts across all policy areas is a new responsibility for the Commission's Regional and Urban Policy Department. Commissioner Hahn is responsible for coordinating the Commission's policies in this area and for ensuring a more "joined up approach".

By 2025, 10% of the world's population is expected to live in just 37 cities: these mega-cities are a feature of Latin America, unlike the mid-sized cities of Europe. But Europe has much experience to share with the rest of the world in providing concrete solutions to urban challenges - optimising existing infrastructure in transport and energy, reducing carbon emissions and boosting city competitiveness on global markets. This founded on the idea that a holistic approach can make investor-ready, green and smart cities where people want to live and do business.

More information

[Inspiring non-EU countries – Regional Policy dialogues](#)

[UN Habitat: World Urban Forum](#)

[EU Urban Development](#)

[European Urban Agenda – Issues Paper](#)

[Web access to the urban dimension of EU policies and initiatives](#)

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