

Opening Remarks Archbishop Dr. Thomas Paul Schirmmacher

Interfaith Dialogue in Line with the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda (26 April 2022, New York)

Your Excellencies and Eminencies,

Dear esteemed colleagues around the globe,

welcome to this Interfaith Dialogue which takes place in the context of the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda later this week. In my capacity as Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, I am greeting you on behalf of 600 million Evangelical Christians around the world. Many of which live, work and pray in cities. Cities are their daily living reality. Their lives are shaped by cities and they in turn shape the cities they are living in, with faith playing a major role. In fact, urban settlements have a specific theological relevance for Christians as the Bible teaches us that mankind was created in a garden but ultimately lives in a city at the end of all times.

We are delighted to be co-hosting this interfaith dialogue titled *"Multi-Religious and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for the Advancement of the New Urban Agenda: How Far Have We Come? Where to Next?"* together with Religions for Peace and UN-Habitat. We have enjoyed many years of good cooperation with both partners. With regards to Religions for Peace, I have the honor to be part of their leadership in my capacity as Co-President. With regards to UN-Habitat the WEA is a long term, active supporter of its mission. The WEA was one of the few religious organizations that participated in Habitat III. We convened a parallel event at Habitat III that produced a groundbreaking statement on cities endorsed by Christian organizations worldwide that explicitly supports the New Urban Agenda entitled *"The Gospel and the Future of Cities: A Call to Action"*.

We are very happy to be able to actively support also the next chapter of faith engagement around the New Urban Agenda. On the WEA side, I personally thank our esteemed colleague Dr Chris Elisara, Co-Director of the World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center, who has been providing excellent support to the topic of "Faith and Cities" for years.

I wish all participants good insights and discussions today. I am sad that I cannot personally participate in this Interfaith Dialogue today. We are meeting with the International Council of the World Evangelical Alliance in Jerusalem at the same time today. Nevertheless, I send warm greetings and wish us all an insightful time.