

Beijing to supply more land for residential housing

Beijing announced plans Friday to supply 6,000 hectares of land by 2021 in a bid to meet the market demand of 1.5 million units of residential houses.

Beijing plans to supply 5,000 hectares of state-owned construction land and 1,000 hectares of collectively-owned construction land in the following five years, according to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning and Land and Resources Management.

Seventy percent of the land will be used for the construction of residential houses with property rights, while 30 percent of the land will be used to build rental houses.

In 2017, Beijing will offer about 1,200 hectares of residential land to build 300,000 units of residential housing.

Analysts said the rising supply of residential land is aimed at relieving the supply-demand contradiction in Beijing's property market and help stabilize housing prices.

In March, Beijing introduced a spate of measures, including higher down payments, higher mortgage rates and tougher purchase restrictions, to cool the red-hot property market.

News story: Motor racing boost to English tourism

New laws come into force on 10 April 2017 which will allow motor racing events to take place on closed public roads in England.

The move could see small races hosted by local communities, bigger European rallies or even a future Monaco-style Grand Prix in an English city, offering huge economic benefits to local communities.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

Britain is a world leader in the motorsport industry and this will further cement our position. There are already races of this kind in some areas of the British Isles which are incredibly popular, attracting thousands of spectators. New road races will boost local economies through increased tourism and hospitality, and offer

community opportunities such as volunteering.

The Motor Sports Association and the Auto-Cycle Union, the respective governing bodies for four- and two-wheel motor sport in the UK, will be authorised to issue permits for the races. They must consult the council, police and other local bodies and be fully satisfied that the event will be safe. Local authorities have the final say over whether a race can go ahead, and may require additional safety measures before, during or after the event as a condition of allowing a race to take place.

Roads Minister Andrew Jones and Ben Taylor, Managing Director, International Motor Sports, with a Mygale-Ford Formula 4 car and a Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car.

Rob Jones, Motor Sports Association Chief Executive, said:

This is a seismic shift for UK motorsport, and one that the MSA and the wider motorsport community have pursued determinedly for many years. We can now take motorsport to the people, and in turn those local hosting communities have the opportunity to benefit from the economic boost that these events may provide.

Gary Thompson MBE BEM, Auto Cycle Union General Secretary and Clerk of the Course for the TT, said:

A lot of hard work has gone into making this happen. Working with the MSA and the Department for Transport, putting this legislation in place will make a big difference to road racing in this country. Obviously this will make road racing more attractive as new opportunities come along but also will have a positive economic impact on those areas staging closed public road racing which can only be a big plus for motorcycle racing and those areas wanting to host such an event.

Roads Minister Andrew Jones with Tom Sharp, Porsche 2015 Rookie champion.

Nigel Mansell CBE, former F1 world champion, said:

I have seen first-hand the very significant impact of motor sport on the economy of the Isle of Man and Jersey, so this is a great move forward for the sport and will bring visitors and pride to parts of the country that wish to stage such events. I am delighted that this government is embracing motorsport, which will assist the UK's world-leading position and improve the sport's ability to help provide opportunities and focus for young people.

The government [consulted on changing the law to allow racing on British roads](#)

[in 2014](#). There were 6,077 responses from individuals, local authorities, police forces and other organisations, with an overwhelming majority in favour of the proposals.

Statement by the Spokesperson on the roadside explosion in South Central Somalia

Thursday's road side explosion in Lower Shabelle near Golweyn village taking a large number of civilian lives increased the already great suffering faced by Somalia. Our thoughts go to the families of the victims and to all Somali people.

Drought has caused significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa and especially Somalia. As a result hundreds of thousands find themselves on the move.

The European Union remains strongly committed to Somalia and its people. Reconstruction of a stable and democratic country, benefitting its population, and a Somali owned security sector to combat terrorism is key for development and the security of the region.

Remarks by Vice-President Dombrovskis at the informal ECOFIN press conference in Valletta

First of all I would like to express condolences to the families and close ones of the victims of the horrendous terror attack in Stockholm.

Moving to topics of today's meeting, I would like to thank you, Edward, for hosting us in this beautiful venue, which for many centuries has been the centre of the political life of this island and for the excellent organisation of the event.

At lunchtime, we had a very timely discussion on deepening of the EMU. It falls between the publication of the Commission's White Paper on the Future of the EU and the preparation of our reflection paper on completing Economic and Monetary Union. So input from Ministers was very timely.

The Euro area is more resilient today than it was just several years ago, but there is a broad consensus that we need to act now to strengthen the resilience of each individual economy and the euro area as a whole.

We discussed the guiding principles on our work on deepening of EMU, which include:

- finding the right balance between risk reduction and risk sharing;
- re-launching the process of convergence within the euro-area;
- and when advancing our work in EU area, being open to non-euro countries.

We also had a substantial discussion of non-performing loans (NPLs).

We shared the view that high ratios of NPLs in several Member States are weighing on the performance of the EU banking sector and have negative implications for economic growth.

Of course one has to underline that tackling NPLs is primarily the responsibility of Member States, because the level and structure of NPLs differ from one country to another and policy instruments to address the NPLs are within the competence of Member States.

However, there are a number of things where we can join up national and EU level efforts to devise a comprehensive and pragmatic strategy on NPLs. I hope that we can make quick progress under the Maltese Presidency, as Edward just outlined.

There was a broad support to develop a blueprint on how to devise a national asset management company (AMC). We should make use of the existing market experience of already existing AMCs which are working already in several Member States. And we need to develop a solution, which Member States can use and implement, and set out how this can be done in line within the EU legal framework.

We are also exploring further initiatives to facilitate the development of a secondary market for NPLs. High quality and comparable data on NPLs are indispensable for this, because investors need to know what they are buying. As a first concrete step, I have asked the European Banking Authority to further investigate the possibility of issuing guidelines on NPL data standardisation; and we are consulting on obstacles faced by private secondary market buyers and loan servicing companies.

For the development of secondary markets, many speakers mentioned the importance of increasing the efficiency of insolvency and loan enforcement frameworks. The Commission will keep up the pressure in the Country Specific Recommendations and via benchmarking reviews. We also invite co-legislators to treat our proposal on business restructuring and recovery as a priority.

Several other work avenues were outlined, including on supervisory action and bank sector restructuring, but I believe ECB will have some further comments

in those work strands.

To conclude, today's discussion was useful first step in building a more coordinated European approach to accelerate the reduction of NPLs. Of course this common EU strategy should take due account of the differences between national banking sectors as there is no one-size-fits-all approach in this area.

Thank you.

Speech: "Peacekeeping should exist alongside both conflict prevention and peace-building work."

Thank you Madam President – I warmly welcoming the Secretary-General's briefing and I agree with his nine point plan for reform and with every other word that he said.

I'd like to pay tribute to the brave men and women serving in UN Peacekeeping missions. For many around the world, they are all that stands between stability and chaos. Over 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives holding that line, including nine this year. We are humbled by their sacrifice.

We have a duty to those peacekeepers, to all those risking their lives today, and to all the people they protect, to ask tough, fundamental questions about peacekeeping deployments.

Peacekeeping is one of the best things this organisation has ever created. Peacekeeping is the jewel in the UN crown. Peacekeeping is the UN's unique selling point. Peacekeeping is also a good investment. In human terms, UN peacekeeping saves lives. In terms of peace, it significantly increases the survival rate of peace agreements. We should continue to invest in this crucial tool that answers the call to help when no one else is coming. But like all investments, we should examine the market. In the first place, we must think long and hard before deploying missions, about whether peacekeeping is the right tool at the right moment.

Horizon scanning and early warning give us the opportunity to use other tools; preventative diplomacy, conflict prevention, mediation.

Early action to prevent conflict and mass human rights abuses remains vital. But that must start long before peacekeepers may be required.

Too often, that moment is missed so when a peacekeeping mission is required we must ask: does this mission have a clear objective, and does it have a

clear exit strategy? Does it have the right mandate? The next question is: will the host government cooperate?

Now there's at least two elements to that question. First, when a government opposes the very deployment of a mission, and secondly where the government hinders the mission's ability to fulfil every part of its mandate once it has been deployed.

History has given us enough tragedies to support the deployment of peacekeepers when host governments are unwilling or unable to protect their own people. With or without the government's consent.

Where the host government does not cooperate, this Council has a crucial role to play. We must ensure that States shoulder their primary responsibility to prevent conflict, minimise suffering and ensure that cycles of conflict are not repeated.

Where there are spoilers to peace, including host governments who seek to stifle missions, we must use all the tools at our disposal to change that behaviour.

But time after time, the message sent by this Council is one of disunity and confusion. We had a chance last year to bring pressure to bear on the parties in South Sudan, but at the crucial moment we failed to deliver. We cannot complain now about the tragic status quo in that country if we aren't prepared to act ourselves.

Once deployed, we must recognise when a peacekeeping mission is no longer the right tool for the job, where other parts of the UN system are better placed to support development and peacebuilding needs, as in Haiti, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire.

We know that peacekeeping is but one tool available to the UN. It cannot deliver every aspect of the UN's response to conflict; peacekeeping should exist alongside both conflict prevention and peace-building work.

And, where military force is necessary, the UN is not the only organisation capable of delivering it. We need only look to West Africa, where ECOWAS has demonstrated regional leadership through deployments in both Mali and in support of the political transition in the Gambia. Or in Somalia, where the African Union mission is degrading the threat from the terrorist group Al Shabaab.

But military operations can only create the space for the political process to progress. So we must redouble our efforts to address the political challenges to peace, not only the security ones, if we are to deliver the Secretary-General's agenda on sustaining peace.

My final point, Madam President, is that, if and when we deploy peacekeeping missions, we must make sure that they are effective.

This means better mission planning, more pledges of troops and equipment, and stronger mission performance.

Mandates must be limited, realistic, prioritised with a clear end goal and the benchmarks for getting there, building on and complementing the work of other parts of the UN, so that we can measure the impact of their activity and hand them over when peacekeeping's task is complete. We must robustly review missions regularly to establish where current situations sit on the spectrum of conflict, and ensure that we are responding and resourcing them appropriately.

Pledges of troops and equipment need to meet specific shortfalls identified by the UN, including the deployment of more women. We need to develop a greater breadth and depth of capabilities, so that the UN can deploy the most appropriate tools to deliver mission mandates.

But ultimately, peacekeeping must perform better. That means high quality training, appropriate equipment and medical provision, and skilled and courageous leadership. Missions are the human face of this organisation to so many people in the world, and they have to act to uphold the principles that we all represent, holding peacekeepers to account for underperformance or misconduct, including crucially, any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Peacekeeper's successes save lives, and we owe it to them and the people they protect to ask these tough questions and find the right answers.

Thank you.