

Meeting: UNHA 2019

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Speaker: Maimunah Mohd Sharif's, the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (closing remarks)

Keywords : 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; arrangements for the transition towards the new governance structure; enhancing capacity-building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda; enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization; global stakeholders forum; interfaith dialogue; New Urban Agenda; pledging conference; SDGs; side event; UN-Habitat Assembly; UN-Habitat Executive Board; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements; Urban October; World Cities Day; World Habitat Day; World Urban Forum

Comments: Accent, emotional speech

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Madam President of the First Session of the UN-Habitat Assembly,  
Distinguished Members of the Bureau of the UN-Habitat Assembly,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Dear Friends,

1. We have just been on a 7-day journey together! The Journey took us 14 years to prepare, but judging by the outcomes, and looking at your exhausted but happy faces, it was worth our time.

2. The journey took us long nights and long days to reach our destination, but it was worth our passion and determination. Today, my dear friends, we are here! We have reached the destination of new UN-Habitat! It is a new beginning!
3. Along the way, we stumbled and fell a few times, but we never stopped getting back up. This is the spirit of our new UN-Habitat. Always committed and ready to fight for what is right!
4. Along the way, we stopped at very interesting stations, notably:
  - Global stakeholders forum
  - Business leader's dialogue
  - Urban solutions exhibition
  - Ministerial roundtable on infrastructure, cities and local action
  - Young women to women forum
  - Gender forum on women and New Urban Agenda
  - One UN Meeting
  - Interfaith dialogue
  - High level dialogue on the theme of the Assembly
  - Regional and local governments forum
  - The 57 side events
  - The Plenary sessions.

5. These were all breathtaking and inspiring stops, which have enabled us to reach the following outcomes:

- Adopting 5 resolutions and 1 decision to enhance the work of UN-Habitat, notably:
  - Resolution on United Nations Human Settlements Programme strategic plan for the period 2020–2023;
  - Resolution on United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements UN systemwide Guidelines for Safer Cities and Human Settlements;
  - Resolution on Enhancing capacity-building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
  - Resolution on Achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements;
  - Resolution on Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements; and
  - Decision on Arrangements for the transition towards the new governance structure of UN-Habitat.
  
- Confirming the relevance and role of UN-Habitat, through the national statements as well as the partnership and pledging conference through which

21 countries pledged USD 152 million; these countries are: **China, Colombia, Republic of Congo, France, the Gambia, Germany, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, South Africa, South Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Zambia.**

- A ministerial declaration reaffirming the urgent need to improve quality of life for all, and to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production, including through, but not limited to, smart technologies, sustainable lifestyles, resource efficiency and moving towards, among other sustainable development strategies, a circular economy;
- Raising the profile of sustainable urbanization issues through record participation; we mobilized 4 heads of states, 49 ministers, 10 vice-ministers, 63 mayors, 127 national governments, 344 sub-national governments, 1,057 stakeholders, including the private sector, for a total of 4,145 registered participants.
- Developing a better understanding of the main causes of the challenges of urbanization around the world.
- Identifying innovative solutions and best practices to urgently and successfully make the best of the opportunities of sustainable urban development, including non-traditional financing mechanisms for development of cities and regions.

- Establishing strategic alliances with national and local governments, the Private sector, stakeholders, civil society and international institutions to scale up innovative solutions in sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

6. We will look back at this week and remember the historic milestones. You have all participated in the **first session** of the UN-Habitat Assembly. You have elected its **first president** and the **first bureau**. We also had the **first meeting** of the UN-Habitat Executive Board with its **first chair and board members**.
7. On that note, allow me to share with you my own **3 heartwarming moments I will always remember**.
8. **I will remember the drive for innovation for sustainable urban solutions shown here**. It was nothing short of inspiring. We are very proud to have brought the brightest and most creative minds together in Nairobi. Our plan is to continue attracting the best ideas and best practices to achieve our vision of **“a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world”**.
9. **I will remember that we have a common drive to transform cities and communities** through better access to basic services and sustainable mobility, secured access to land and adequate and affordable housing, smart and liveable cities, resources efficiency and adaptation to climate change, social

integration and improved living standards for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons.

10. **I will strongly remember the victory of multilateralism.** Yes multilateralism won! As the late President Abraham Lincoln said, “a house divided against itself, cannot stand”. United we stood tall.
11. The issues that symbolize our common fight and that bring us together, **whether it is extreme poverty, inequalities, slums, social exclusion and marginalization, gender-based discrimination, humanitarian crises, conflicts, climate change, or high unemployment,** deserve more attention than our differences.
12. The solution that unifies us, **which we have identified as sustainable urban development is the key to sustainable development.** Well-planned and well-managed urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries, from Bamako to New York, from Beijing to Rio de Janeiro, and from Mexico City to Kuala Lumpur!
13. We need renewed commitment to ensure that we build inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities, for 70% of humanity will live in cities by 2050. Therefore, solving cities’ problems will make it much more easier to achieve the SDGs, including along the urban-rural continuum. At this Assembly, we have also shown how the New Urban Agenda can help make

that future possible. This is the renewed mission of UN-Habitat and the focus of our Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

14. Our work together this week, the journey that we have taken together is not the end. In reality, it represents the beginning of a story of transformation and change. We have laid strong foundations this week, now it is time to build on them and create a world where no one is left behind.

15. For this reason, I would like to reiterate these 3 calls to action.

**1. Strongly position sustainable urbanization at the center of your development priorities** through (i) deliberate efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda, (ii) strengthening the urban governance structure and institutions, (iii) adopting integrated sustainable urban development policies and plans, and (iv) implementing impact-based projects and programmes.

**2. Adopt policy solutions that carefully promote science, technology and innovation in fulfilling the promises of the 2030 Agenda**, including using artificial intelligence to support decisions-making processes and to efficiently and inclusively deliver basic and social services that transform lives in cities. I call once more for the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

**3. Invest in UN-Habitat.** Bring ideas, solutions, expertise and resources. A stronger UN-Habitat signifies a stronger and results-oriented implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDGs. We are committed to working with you. While we sincerely appreciate earmarked contributions, it is core non-earmarked contributions that will reduce fragmentation in our work, enable us to achieve impact, while increasing predictability and flexibility in the implementation of the priorities agreed together in the Strategic Plan.

16. Before I conclude, to keep the flame burning and the spirit of this first Assembly alive, I would like to invite you to passionately celebrate Urban October from 1st to 31st October 2019.
17. Let's rejoice during World Habitat Day to be celebrated on 7th October 2019 in Cameroon.
18. Let's renew our commitment to the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs in the Asia Pacific Urban Forum on 16-18 October in Penang, Malaysia.
19. Let's jubilate on World Cities Day to be celebrated on 31st October in Ekaterinburg in the Russian Federation.
20. And, I warmly invite you to the next World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi from 8 to 13 February 2020.



21. I would like to thank my colleagues in UN-Habitat, and the UN family in Nairobi, all the staff and volunteers who have made this first Assembly a memorable milestone.
22. In the midst of all the legislative and normative work, I was able to meet with some of you through 61 bilateral meetings. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Victor Kisob, my Deputy Executive Director, who also held 30 bilateral meetings and who headed the Assembly Task Force. This made it possible for the new UN-Habitat to take its first steps.
23. This Assembly would not have been possible without the contributions of Member States. I am grateful to all who have contributed in kind and in cash. But I must take this opportunity to thank the host country. Kenya's support has been most generous. My sincere gratitude to President Kenyatta, the Government and people of Kenya. To the 13 Kenyan civil servants who have been working with us, we will always remember your contribution to this Assembly.
24. I would like to thank our Muslim colleagues, brothers and sisters who worked tirelessly in the Holy Month of Ramadan... Shukran!
25. To all the Member States, delegates and stakeholders, thank you for being patient and accommodating. You have been the story of this Assembly. I wish you safe travels back home.

26. Finally, I would like to assure all of you and also those who have been following us on social media; everyone in the wider world that UN-Habitat is back. We are here to walk with you in the rest of the journey into a brighter urban future where no one and no place is left behind.

Thank you.

Asante Sana.

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