

# Introductory Remarks to the 2nd Session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat

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UN Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of UNON

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**Thank you, for that gracious introduction Mr. Chair.**

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat,  
Honourable Charles Hinga, Principal Secretary of the State Department  
for Housing and Urban Development and Head of the Delegation of the  
Republic of Kenya representing our Host Country Kenya,  
Honourable Martha Delgado, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly,  
Your Excellency Mr Marek Garztecki, Chair of the Executive Board and  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to UN-Habitat,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished members of the Executive Board,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Director-General of UNON, I warmly welcome you on behalf of my  
sister and friend, Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif, to this second  
session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat for the year 2021.

I congratulate you, Ambassador Marek Garztecki, for your leadership as  
Chair of the Executive Board since your election this past April, and wish  
to acknowledge the tremendous work you have done in preparing this  
Session.

As the last session of the Executive Board in April 2021 was virtual, it is a  
real pleasure to see all of you in this first truly hybrid meeting of the  
Executive Board since November 2019. It is excellent to have at least  
100 delegates participating here in person at UNON, and to have others  
participating virtually. Inclusivity is key to all conferences and UNON will  
strive to ensure that our facilities meet the expectations of all delegates. I  
also wish to thank the Government of Kenya, and the Ministry of Health  
for their guidance and support.

UNON continues to make every effort to ensure that important meetings such as the Executive Board can be convened safely and with all precautions taken, given the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNON is also making every effort to meet the urgent current as well as future expanded conferencing demands in terms of capacity as well as functionality, to support the UN-Habitat Assembly, the UN Environment Assembly, as well as other associated meetings in Nairobi.

Since 4 October, when UNON opened the Complex up to 60% of staff and other categories of personnel, we have seen increasing numbers of Delegates and colleagues at the Complex. We are determined to ensure the safety and protection of all of these colleagues, as well as Delegates. In line with the concept of the UN Complex as a safe-haven for all, today over 93% of staff, other categories of personnel and the contractors based on the Complex have been fully vaccinated. We are pleased to have both the Delegate's Lounge and the Recreation Centre open again, signaling a return to some level of normality. UN-Habitat's back to office rate is currently at 24%, and we expect more colleagues to return to the office following our guidance for gradual return to office policy.

I would like to congratulate Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif, for successfully completing and achieving the targets set out for UN-Habitat in 2021, in line with the work programme for the year 2021 which was approved by the Executive Board. COVID-19 and the ensuing socio-economic impact continues to affect the bottom line of many countries. The adaptability of UN-Habitat, its COVID-19 response plan and its emergency response plan, executed with the support of UNON, is a clear achievement despite financial constraints and the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic .

We are meeting only two days after COP26 has ended, and our fight against global warming continues to assume the greatest urgency. In his opening statement to COP26, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that, if at the end of the meeting, commitments fall short, countries must revisit their national climate plans and policies. "Either we stop it — or it stops us." This past Saturday, at the conclusion of COP26, the Secretary-General acknowledged that we did not achieve all the goals we wished to at the conference. To quote him: "Our fragile planet is hanging by a thread. We are still knocking on the door of climate catastrophe. It is time to go into emergency mode — or our chance of reaching net zero will itself be zero...Build resilience of vulnerable communities against the

here and now impacts of climate change.” UN-Habitat and UNEP play an extraordinary role in this fight, both in terms of the climate mitigation and adaptation agenda. They are fighting the good fight, and your work, and your deliberations are critical to this success of this agenda.

With the fierce urgency of now, I wish you a very fruitful session, and a positive and successful outcome.

(750 words – excluding salutation)