

## **Briefing on Outcomes of High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda**

**20 May 2022**

### **Statement of the Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat**

- *H.E., Silvio Jose Albuquerque E Silva, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UNEP and UN-Habitat and Chair, Executive Board of UN-Habitat*
- *Distinguished Representatives*
- *Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this briefing on the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, that took place in New York on 28 July 2022.

You will recall that the Advisory Committee was established by the President of the General Assembly, to prepare for the high-level meeting and to promote the New Urban Agenda throughout the 76<sup>th</sup> Session. The Group held two meetings before the high-level meeting.

The third meeting of the Advisory Committee in which I participated virtually was held this Wednesday, 18 May 2022. The President of the General Assembly used the occasion to announce that he will issue early next month, the Presidents Summary of the high-level meeting, that will include an Annex of Actions consolidating commitments of Member States and various non-State actors.

As we await the President's Summary, I felt it important to brief you about the high-level meeting including my personal observations, and about numerous associated meetings and events.

Let me begin by thanking all of you for your steadfast support throughout the preparatory process. Your efforts to work with your colleagues in capitals and at permanent missions in New York, contributed significantly to the success of the high-level meeting. In retrospect, I believe it was strategic that we held the 2022 First Session of the Executive Board, just 30 days prior to the high-level meeting. The briefings with regional groups and the session of the Executive Board, enabled Permanent Representatives in Nairobi to mobilize Member States, to participate in the high-level meeting, in high numbers and at senior levels.

Another key factor that drew attention of Member States to the high-level meeting on 28 April 2022, was the ECOSOC special meeting on sustainable urbanization and the New Urban Agenda. Convened on 21 April 2022 by the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Collen Kelapile who is also the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations. The ECOSOC special meeting generated well-publicized debate about urbanization, inequality, and UN reform. This helped elevate the profile of the New Urban Agenda, and encourage Member States to attend the high-level meeting and in high numbers. I will expand upon this below.

With respect to the high-level meeting, I am happy to report that, over 90 Member States participated in-person in the General Assembly Hall on 28 April 2022, of whom 76 governments delivered statements. These included statements from 45 Ministers and Vice Ministers, and statements from the European Union, ASEAN, the Group of 77 + China, and Africa. The President of the General Assembly indicated that, the high-level meeting was among the most well-attended mandated meetings of the General Assembly in recent years.

In line with the request of the President of the General Assembly, most of the statements delivered by Member States are action oriented, and offer commitments for the future on key aspects of sustainable urbanization. These include COVID recovery, housing, climate, post-conflict, financing, and localization. As part of the President's Summary, they will provide the basis for accelerating the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in ways we had not even imagined.

Responding to calls from Member States, a **Group of Friends** of UN-Habitat was established, as a key outcome of the high-level meeting. Importantly, during the high-level meeting, 32 Member States expressed interest in joining the Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization, and the New Urban Agenda with Botswana and Slovakia as co-facilitators. They both emphasized that the Group of Friends is an important political platform, that will serve as an intermediary between the General Assembly and the United Nations Secretariat in New York. It will build upon the momentum of the high-level meeting, to elevate the organization, the issues, and the agenda among Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York.

Of equal significance, H.E. Martha Delgado, the President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, ably represented the Habitat Assembly at the closing segment of the high-level meeting, while also ably representing the Government of Mexico by delivering the statement of her delegation. I would like to register my thanks to President Delgado, for accompanying me in a meeting with the President of the General Assembly immediately prior to the high-level meeting, during which time she underscored the importance of funding UN-Habitat, and the role of the Habitat Assembly in carrying forward the outcomes of the high-level meeting.

*Distinguished Representatives,*

Among the many other achievements of the high-level meeting, was the successful alignment of the strategic reports, intergovernmental meetings, and key events of the preparatory process. You will recall that both the Committee of the Permanent Representatives and the Executive Board urged the Secretariat, to pursue the high-level meeting not as a standalone meeting, but as part of series of meetings that can elevate the mandate of UN-Habitat. I would like to submit that these objectives have very much been achieved.

Accordingly, way back in October 2021, the President of the General Assembly called upon the United Nations Secretariat, to complete the Quadrennial Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda six months ahead of schedule, so that the Quadrennial Report could serve as the pre-session document of the high-level meeting. I wish to underscore that the United Nations Secretariat met this deadline. This enabled Member States prepare statements to the high-level meeting with the benefit of the findings and recommendations of the Report.

I must also add that there were regional inputs to the high-level meeting. The Regional Economic Commissions successfully engaged Member States, during the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development held in March 2022. The Regional Economic Commissions presented a report on the regional inputs to the high-level meeting as called for by the General Assembly.

The President of ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly established precedent, by coordinating their respective intergovernmental bodies to promote an issue of common concern, in this case, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. As I had indicated earlier, on 21 April 2022, the President of ECOSOC convened Member States at the ECOSOC special meeting, to review the Quadrennial Report of the Secretary-General through the lens of inequality and UN reform, areas of strategic importance to ECOSOC. On 28 April 2022, the President of ECOSOC addressed the General Assembly at the opening session, providing Member States with a summary of the deliberations of the ECOSOC special meeting.

The Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments, with the support of the Government of Ecuador and UN-Habitat, convened 30 mayors at a session held on 27 April 2022 of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments. The Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and I opened the session. At the high-level meeting on 28 April, four of the 30 mayors, addressed Member States, to deliver the key outcomes of the World Assembly, in the segment entitled “leading locally,” thereby setting another precedent at the General Assembly.

The professionals, the grassroots, and the United Nations constituencies of the New Urban Agenda followed suit. Their tireless efforts to work with the diverse members of their constituencies, resulted in strong interventions at the high-level meeting during the segment entitled “mobilizing millions.” The combined contributions of the Deputy Secretary-General, UNEP, WHO, UNHCR, and the Regional Commissions demonstrated the commitment by the United Nations family, to strengthen efforts to support Member States accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

To augment the above, over twenty side events were organized during the week of the high-level meeting. These included seven UN-Habitat corporate events co-sponsored by Member States on floating cities, financing climate adaptation, urban resilience in SIDS, housing and ending homelessness, the World Assembly, the Road to Katowice, and the Local2030 Coalition for the Decade of Action.

*Honorable Chair,*

While we should all be truly encouraged by these developments, the success of the high-level meeting has created opportunities that we must seize. The statements of Member States and non-State actors have yet to be consolidated but the key messages are clear.

The international community needs to zero-in on housing as a vehicle for reducing inequality and on sustainable urbanization as central to climate action. It needs to promote multilevel governance and strengthen engagement with local governments and other local actors. The international community needs as well to promote durable solutions and inclusive planning to address urban displacement and ensure urban recovery.

As immediate follow up measures, there are five areas of work that we may wish to consider.

1. *Completion of the President's Summary Report of the High-Level Meeting, including an annex that consolidates actions and commitments.* UN-Habitat will continue to support the President of the General Assembly moving forward.
2. *Scaling up of the Urban Agenda Platform.* Members of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization are keen for UN-Habitat to promote the Urban Agenda Platform not only as a repository of reports of national governments, cities, professionals, business leaders, grassroots, professionals, and UN entities but also as a platform for policy advocacy, networking, and analysis.

3. *Promoting the New Urban Agenda in Intergovernmental Meetings and Global Forums.* I am pleased to report that the Africities Summit this week in Kisumu, Kenya has served governments, UN entities, local governments, grassroots, and professionals as an important forum to advance the actions and commitments of the high-level meeting. We must do the same in other forums including the World Urban Forum, HLPF, the Nature Summit, G-20, G-7, and COP27.
  
4. *Utilization of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Urban Forum, 27-30 June 2022.* The President of the General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC, the Secretary-General, and representatives of local governments, grassroots, and UN entities can utilize the Constituent Assemblies, special sessions, and networking events of the World Urban Forum to carry forward the commitments of the high-level meeting.
  
5. *Implementation of UN-Habitat priority areas.* The aspects of sustainable urbanization highlighted by Member States at the high-level meeting correspond directly to the four UN-Habitat priority areas. I welcome the support of the Executive Board to assist the organization to pursue the four critical areas of housing, climate, localization, and post-conflict.

*Distinguished Representatives,*



In conclusion, I would like to call upon each of you to maintain the level of support that you provided in the run up to the high-level meeting to help me sustain the momentum. As you urged me last year, we must leverage the high-level meeting in every way possible to elevate the mandate of the organization and, in doing so, ensure UN-Habitat is fit for purpose to fulfill this mandate.

I look forward to discussing these and related areas of work with you further. Next, I would like to invite my colleague Ms Katerina Bezgachina to share with you a few results from our communication at the High Level Meeting. Meanwhile, Mr Chris Mensah is also on standby to address any questions you may have.

Finally, Mr Neil Khor will brief us on the latest updates regarding the 11th World Urban Forum in Katowice, Poland next month between 26-30 June 2022.

Thanks very much.

(1892 words; 15mins; Edited by RW)