

First UN-Habitat Assembly, 27 – 31 May 2019

Remarks by Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN-Habitat

GENDER FORUM

DATE: 28/05/2019 at approx. 7.40am, 3 minutes, City Stage, UNON

Ministers, YB Zuraida binti Kamaruddin, Minister of Housing and Local Government Malaysia,

Hon Irene Campos Gómez – Minister of Housing and Human Settlements Costa Rica,

UN Colleagues -Acting Executive Director, UN-Environment, Joyce Msuya and UN Resident Coordinator Siddarth Chatterjee

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Gentlemen,
And most importantly, my fellow strong women!**

**A very early good morning to you all!
Habari za asubuhi! For my fellow Muslims Ramadhan Kareem!**

1. On behalf of UN-Habitat, I wish to welcome all of you to Nairobi and to the first ever UN-Habitat Assembly!

Today, I would like to share with you three key messages:

2. **One, cities are the places for change.** For millenia, women have been treated as second class citizens. This is changing, but there is still progress to be made. Cities present a major opportunity to achieve gender equality. Cities are where ideas are created, inequalities are challenged, and

opportunities are created. We must all continue the struggle for gender equality, in cities and beyond.

- 3. Secondly, gender equality is not about women.** Achieving gender equality will benefit all genders and address all inequalities. People of diverse backgrounds must all work together, to empower women and all minorities. Women are not one homogenous group, but rather a collection of innovative, strong, intelligent and creative people. We must support each other and recognise the different challenges that different women, and different genders, face. In order to achieve gender equality, we also need men who believe in the same principles – I am happy today that we have several strong men with us here in this Gender Forum.
- 4. Thirdly, gender equality is an investment.** Achieving gender equality requires financial resources. But it is the ultimate investment. It is an investment that will reap substantive benefits, both socially and economically. Investing in gender equality will benefit all of society, men and women, boys and girls, and others. But it requires continued and sustained investment. Gender equality is a long-term struggle, but it is a struggle worth fighting for.
- 5. I would like to close with sincere** thanks to the Government of Malaysia for sponsoring this event, as well as the strong support from Government of Costa Rica and of course the Government of Kenya.

Thank you.