

First UN-Habitat Assembly, 27 – 31 May 2019

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

Partnership and Pledging Conference at the UN-Habitat Assembly

Wednesday, 29 MAY 2019 at approx. 8AM, 6 minutes, CR1

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I am pleased to extend a warm welcome and express my sincere appreciation to you for taking the time to participate in this first Partnership and Pledging Conference, a key event of the historic inaugural UN-Habitat Assembly.

2. Your presence at this conference is testimony to your commitment to work together to advance the goal of sustainable urbanization as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its guiding principle to “leave no one behind”.

3. In a rapidly urbanising world where two thirds of the global population will live in urban areas by 2050, Member States recognize the prominence of sustainable urbanisation in the 2030 agenda. No less than one third of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets have an urban component, and one of the 17 SDGs, Goal 11, is fully dedicated to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

4. And in 2016, Member States, once again highlighted urbanization as one of the twenty-first century’s most transformative trends when they adopted New

Urban Agenda at the Habitat III Conference. They adopted this Agenda to achieve a vision where all inhabitants enjoy just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.

5. To achieve the goals set out in the New Urban Agenda and SDGs, we must work together to build inclusive cities by all people, for all people, from the young to the old, the able and less able, the rich and poor, for women and men. That is why the theme of working together as partners runs throughout this Assembly.

6. On Sunday, Business Leaders Dialogue, from small and medium size to established technology and real estate companies met to discuss how the private sector can contribute to sustainable urban development through public private partnerships. They called for joint platforms for dialogue, enabling environments to allow business to operate better in cities, and bankable projects in which companies can invest to build more prosperous cities.

7. And at the stakeholders' forum, on Saturday, partnerships were again at the fore. The meeting highlighted how multi-stakeholder engagement allows cross fertilisation of ideas giving rise to innovation. It builds on the knowledge and experiences of all partners, ensuring that the needs of different constituents are taken into account to achieve inclusive urban policies, legislation, strategies and services.

8. So it is against this background, that this Conference includes a high-level partnership event to share experiences and ideas on how together, we can mobilize and leverage adequate resources to support implementation of urban related SDGs.

9. UN-Habitat is ready to work with partners to support implementation of the SDGs in line with the call from Member States for UN-Habitat to play a focal point and coordinating role with the United Nations System on sustainable urbanization and human settlements. This role includes generating evidence-based, practical guidance, developing normative knowledge and innovative approaches, building the capacity and tools for sustainable urban development, and providing guidelines for data to monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs, among others.

10. To respond to this call, UN-Habitat has developed a results-focused strategic plan for the period 2020-2025 aimed at four domains of change: To reduce spatial inequality and poverty; enhance shared prosperity of cities and regions; strengthen climate action and improved urban environment; and respond and prevent urban crises.

11. The plan will be guided by the principles of social inclusion and human rights for all including women, children, youth and older persons, the disabled, and other vulnerable groups.

12. How will UN-Habitat do this? We intend to take advantage of 4 opportunities.

13. First, by repositioning the agency as a centre of excellence that provides a point of reference on data, norms, standards, legal frameworks, policies, strategies and urban innovations. This body of knowledge and tools will help all countries in their efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda and urban related SDGs.

14. Second, by developing five large scale integrated flagship programmes, funded by multiple donors, that combine both normative and operational elements, and

are aimed at delivering results and impact at scale. The programmes will be aligned to the four domains of change and cross-cutting areas of the strategic plan.

15.Third by fully aligning our work at country level with that of other United Nations Agencies and stakeholders to deliver holistic country programmes that contribute to achieving the SDGs and are aligned to national strategies and priorities.

16.Fourth by completing ongoing institutional reforms to transform UN-Habitat into a more focused, relevant, efficient, transparent, accountable organization that is relevant and whose services are in demand by Member States. The strengthened UN-Habitat, resulting from these reforms will also benefit from the enhanced governance structure of the UN-Habitat Assembly and Executive Board which are helping to frame the global urbanization debate and provide strategic guidance to the organization.

17.Needless to say, in all aspects of our work, UN-Habitat, will call upon all development actors, and stakeholders, including local and regional governments, civil society, private sector, multilateral and regional development banks and academia to join hands to advance implementation of the New Urban Agenda and urban related SDGs.

18.Excellencies, it is estimated that the strategic plan will cost an estimated US\$ 1.9 billion over six years. The requirements for 2019 to implement the current programme of work is USD250 million, and for 2020, a similar level of funding is required. I am extremely grateful to donors and development partners who have already provided funding in 2019 of almost US\$75 million towards implementation of the strategic plan. I appeal for your support to reach the funding targets to deliver planned results the strategic plan.

19. Thank you for listening to these words of introduction. I look forward to your participation in the next discussion and subsequent pledging session. Given the milestones reached so far, the commitment shown, and the progress already made at this Assembly, I have absolutely no doubt that together, as partners, we can accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you!