



**Statement of the Executive Director
On the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2019**

As we mark the 2019 World Refugee Day, I together with the UN-Habitat family stand in solidarity with the millions of refugees worldwide. The World Refugee Day is not only a day to commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of the millions of refugees, it is also a moment for us to reflect on how we can best support and improve their lives and facilitate their return where possible. This year's theme: “#StepWithRefugees” reminds us also that it is so important to work closely with refugees as they are trying to find safe and dignified solutions on their journey.

Refugees increasingly end up in protracted situations waiting for opportunities for permanent resettlement or voluntary return to their countries of origin. UN-Habitat partners with UNHCR, national and local governments to find more durable solutions that address the challenges faced by refugees, while addressing the needs also of host communities and enabling social cohesion between both. The Kalobeyei refugee settlement in Northern Kenya has a town plan, which will allow it to transition over time into neighborhoods, while ensuring sustainable service delivery, housing solutions and livelihood opportunities for both refugees and host communities in the short term. At the same time in Afghanistan, we are supporting the government in facilitating the large scale return of refugees from Pakistan, most of them seeking to settle in medium-sized cities, as their rural areas of origin are still not safe or don't provide any perspectives for their families. The return is going hand in hand with a full-scale urbanization strategy, providing secure access to land, avoiding rapid informal and uncontrolled growth. Local governments, with support of their national governments, are finding real solutions for both short and long term challenges. I urge the global community to learn from these new practices in Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and so many other places, to make financing accessible to local governments and local service providers and empower refugees and host communities to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Finally, as we celebrate this day it is important to reaffirm that the goal of delivering decent lives for the millions of people who have been displaced from their homes is at the forefront of our priorities. As the UN agency tasked with promoting sustainable cities, we will continue to advocate for cities that are welcoming and inclusive for refugees.

For More Information:

[Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement](#)

[Urban Settlements to Iraqi Returnees](#)

[Housing, Land and Property Issues of Syrian Refugees](#)