

NAIROBI, 30 May 2019 – UN-Habitat has signed a letter of intent with the People's Government of Songyang County, China to collaborate on the implementation of Songyang Innovative Rural Development Programme (Songyang Programme). The Songyang Programme is the first collaboration programme for sustainable and innovative rural developments that will also ensure maximum benefits from both urban and rural areas and to strengthen urban-rural linkages.

The Songyang Programme will promote the role of rural development within the continuum of human settlements to ensure that No One and No Place is left behind. The Programme will build on inspiring practices implemented in the rural Songyang County and many other places to showcase how such innovative inventions have contributed to revitalizing the rural area through empowering the local people technically, financially and mentally while protecting the environment. Harnessing successful stories such as the one of Songyang's rural development is expected to provide valuable lessons and inspirations to other rural areas worldwide. Mutually, best practices from other rural districts in China and beyond will in turn, stimulate further innovations in Songyang and globally. As a result, innovative and sustainable development initiatives are expected to significantly strengthen rural areas and their linkages to cities, relieve the demographic pressure of urban areas, and extensively contribute to the overall prosperity of human settlements.

To strengthen rural development through promoting and implementing rural innovations, UN-Habitat will cooperate with Songyang County to strengthen the capacity of countries and actors to effectively engage with rural development in the context of the continuum of Human settlements.

An international Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages which will be held during the last week of October 2019, to promote rural development while enhancing prosperity in the urban-rural continuum. The Forum will be held in Songyang with the view to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the territorial dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the Forum Songyang and other regions and countries will demonstrate experiences in rural development.

The signing of the letter of collaboration took place at the of the first UN-Habitat Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya 27-31 May 2019. Songyang Delegation also held an exhibition during the UN Habitat assembly showcasing their efforts towards innovative practices for rural development. They also attended and were panellists in various side events demonstrating such efforts.