

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

**Mayors Migration Council (MMC) High-level luncheon event:  
"Reflection on cities' place in intergovernmental spaces – how UN agencies engage city leaders"**

**Monday 15 July 2019 at UN Delegates Dining Lounge, New York**

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**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor to be here with you today, at this high-level luncheon organized by the Mayors Migration Council. I would like to thank the MMC for convening this important event as the work with local authorities – and how to enable them to contribute to the implementation of global frameworks - are very prominent in our daily work.

Urban growth – due to migration as well as demographic development – is a global phenomenon, and cities, especially small and intermediate cities, continue to attract people, looking for better livelihood and jobs, safety or improved access to housing and services. This trend that has been ongoing for years, and more than half of the world's population already today live in cities.

Member States are therefore more and more acknowledging that the SDGs, such as other global frameworks, can't be achieved without the active contributions of their cities. The New Urban Agenda already is very clear in this regard, highlighting the role of local authorities for establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities. It emphasizes role of local authorities for provision of services and housing, as well as underlining the need to build up their capacities - for sustainable and inclusive urbanization.

A “whole of government approach” is one of the guiding principles of the recently adopted Global Compact on Migration. And the Global Compact for Refugees emphasizes the roles of local authorities as often being “first responders to large-scale refugee situations, and among the actors that experience the most significant impact over the medium term.”

UN-Habitat has a long tradition working with local authorities and has continuously advocated for the “a stronger role of local authorities”, building up on the Habitat I agenda from 1976. Our agency is mandated to provide specific technical knowledge to local leaders and enhance their capacity to better plan and manage their cities. This includes providing services more efficiently, developing housing solutions that are both accessible and adequate, making urban planning process more inclusive and enable urban growth in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

On the other hand, we are also supporting and encouraging national level authorities for making policy process more inclusive by creating platforms for dialogue such as National Urban Forums, where all urban stakeholder, including local authorities have a voice – and

can therefore take ownership in all phases of urban policy processes, not only when it comes to implementation.

Local authorities, in many cases, have developed innovative approaches for finding solutions that are most suitable for their respective local contexts – setting the priorities right for making sure, no one in their city is left behind. But they must be enabled to do this – they must be provided with the appropriate financial and human resources and legal frameworks that give them room to take actions.

UN-Habitat has just recently been commissioned by the Secretary General to develop a UN wide strategy for sustainable urbanization. This strategy is again underlining the importance of local authorities for tackling the different challenges for development, but also harnessing the opportunities of the transformative power of urbanization.

With global events on urbanization, such as the World Urban Forum, UN-Habitat also offers platforms for knowledge exchanges – across government levels, as well as for peer-to-peer learning.

I would like to thank the MMC for letting me share UN-Habitat's role for supporting local authorities in global processes – and let me already now invite you to the World Urban Forum in February 2020 in Abu Dhabi!