

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

Meeting of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments

Monday 15 July 2019 at the One UN Millennium Hotel

**Dear friends from local and regional governments,
Mayors, Governors, Councils, President of UCLG,
Representative of the European Commission,
Dear Secretaries General of the different members of the Global Taskforce,
But especially, Dear friends,**

I am very happy to see so many of you here today. You have travelled the world to come to New York during this High Level Political Forum, in a global effort to bring local voices to the United Nations to emphasize, one again, the importance of local and regional governments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is the fourth year that the HLPF takes place, and the Global Taskforce has always been here to demonstrate how local development and local solutions, decided locally, are one of the most efficient ways to advance in the spirit of Agenda 2030: fight poverty, defend the planet, ensure equal access to basic services, facilitate growth, create decent jobs and bring citizens and communities close to decision making.

The role and presence of local governments in the implementation of the SDGs has been exponential. Last year we were able to co-organize the First Local and regional government Forum here in New York, in July. This year we will have it during the September SDG Forum, with reduced time, but increased visibility as local governments will be at the UN together with Heads of state and governments. I know that most of you, Mayors and Governors, have direct contact with your Heads of State, but here at the United Nations, this is still rare, but we are working together to raise the profile of local and regional governments as key actors for sustainable development.

In a way, we have already succeeded, together, to bring more and more local voices to the UN. Not only from Mayors or Governors, but also thanks to the special relationship that you hold with your own communities and your own citizens, but also with private sector and organized civil society.

I believe this year is also different because, as we celebrate the first 5 years of Agenda 2030, we are also moving to a different implementation phase. I think that the time has come to pass to a “phase two” in localizing the SDGs. The last years have been successful in bringing the SDGs to the local and regional governments of all the world. I want to personally thank the Global Taskforce members, and the special effort made by UCLG to create awareness about the SDGs, create commitment in Mayors, Governors and local officials across the world, but also bringing Agenda 2030 to the citizens, as only local and regional governments can do.

With 10 more years to go to achieve the SDGs, time has come to act, but also to analyse how are we acting. We hear many good stories about local implementation of SDGs. We need to hear more about how SDGs are transforming your territories. How the Agenda 2030 can be truly transformative at local level, change the ways of operating cities, innovate, be more inclusive, think more about the ones who needs us the most, talk more with other spheres of government, establish new channels of trust with both citizens and central governments. Do more, and do it better.

It is a lot to ask to local governments, when you have already too much in this plate, but in UN-Habitat you will always have an ally to support you implementing and innovating. We were the first contributors to the Global Taskforce, with the first funds to facilitate the presence of local governments to the ECOSOC Integration segment back in 2015. Some of you were already there, some of you are new, but we all benefit from the heritage of the municipal movement, more than 100 years old, that has brought us here today.

Finally, I just want to invite you all to the World Urban Forum that will take place in Abu Dhabi during the week of 8 -13th February 2020. In this occasion, we have established specific mechanisms to enhance the participation of local and regional governments and to ensure that the themes and issues that are a priority for the constituency have the necessary space. The #Listen2cities room will be one, and we are happy to discuss many others. We are already started in-depth discussions around issues such the role of local governments in creating citizenship and bringing citizens close to understand public action and feel that they belong to the city they live in. We will continue this conversation during the upcoming UCLG Congress in Durban, when I hope to meet many of you again. I am aware that I am not able to participate to many of the events organized by the different members of the Global Taskforce. Unfortunately, my agenda is very busy and I cannot go to many of your different congress and events. But please believe how much I would like to attend and how thankful I always am for your invitations.

To conclude. I wish you a very fruitful participation to HLPF and that your presence here will be useful to bring back to your different territories new ideas, new transformative actions and a renewed strength to keep making the world a better place.

Thank you very much.