

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

High Level Political Forum (HLPF) side event on “Financing the SDGs at local level”

Tuesday 16 July 2019 at UN Headquarters, New York

**Dear Ministers of Italy and Cameroon,
Permanent Representatives from member states,
Governor of Emilia Romagna, Italy,
Mayors and representatives of local and regional governments,
Colleagues,**

I would like to commence with the words of the former President of the UN General Assembly, His Excellency Miroslav LAJČÁK of Slovakia “We only have two choices. One: We finance the SDGs, and we achieve them. Or two: we don’t and we fail”.

Cities play a very special part in Agenda 2030 since 65% of the SDG targets are responsibility of local and regional governments. Therefore, financing the SDGs at local level should ensure to achieve already 65% of the Agenda 2030. With this idea in mind, UN-Habitat, together with UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Cities and Local Governments met last year in the city of Venice, in Italy, hosted by AICCRE, the Italian association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

The objective was to debate how to respond to the very direct question “How can we finance the SDGs at local level?”.

The dialogue took place with the presence of Ministries in charge of finance or planning, local governments and UN agencies. More than 30 countries contributed to bring new ideas about financing cities and local development. The Honourable President of the Emilia Romagna Region will bring more details during his presentation later. I would like to give only some considerations about this challenging issue.

First, the time has come to improve the relation of trust between the different levels of government, central and local governments need to work together to face the challenge of Agenda 2030. Fruitful dialogue, renewed confidence and equal access to financial transfers from the centre to the local levels are key to deliver the many of the services that the Sustainable Development Goals will require.

Second, local and regional governments need to take their own responsibilities to increase endogenous resources, generate them locally through increase taxation and expanding revenue. We are very aware of the difficulties in the poorest places of the world, but responsibility, together with increased accountability and better delivery are key to break the informality cycle.

Finally, the international financial system needs to change to consider the financial needs of cities and local governments. Cities are the places where people live, when opportunities for social development happen, and in far too many places of the world, the

financial instruments for cities are still too few, too old and too inadequate for the increasing needs that cities need to face. I congratulate the work of UNCDF in this sense, and UN-Habitat is very happy to work together with the Malaga Coalition to change the way that the financial system perceives cities and local governments.

Financing is often the key for things to happen. Of course it is not the only thing, but it definitely helps! I am very proud to present here the recommendations of the Venice City Solutions and I am looking forward to hear more ideas about how we can, together, finance the SDGs at local level, and for all.

Thank you very much.