

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

**Closed Door Consultation on Urban Drug Policy, Public Safety and
Health: “Drug control, Habitat III and Public Safety; a Comprehensive
Approach to Drugs”**

Monday 9 September 2019 at the Guildhall Art Gallery, London

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of UN-Habitat, I wish to convey our most sincere appreciation and pleasure to be part of this Closed-Door Consultation on Urban Drug Policy, Public Safety and Health. The recognition today that the ‘war on drugs’ has failed to achieve its stated objectives of eliminating or reducing the production, consumption of illegal drugs – and in fact created negative consequences impacting the economic, social and cultural sectors, most notably in cities, comes at an important moment when two key global action plans – namely, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda have put people, health and human rights at the centre of sustainable development. The two global action plans acknowledge that addressing safety issues are now accepted as a cornerstone for, and a primary outcome of sustainable development. While all areas of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals shape the nature and dynamic of the drug and safety problem, Goal 11 in particular positions cities and other human settlements as the sites where the impact of the drug and safety problem is most vivid, and at the same time where the response thereto on development solutions can be observed at the individual, family and community levels. Hence, the focus of this consultation on drugs, public safety and health is intertwined with sustainable urban development. Without safety, there is no sustainable urban development, and likewise, without sustainable urban development, there is no safety.

Today, I would like to share with you three key messages:

One, on the role of the United Nations. On 7 November 2018, members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed a UN System Common Position and shared policy on supporting the implementation of the international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration. In the position, members of the CEB committed to supporting each other’s activities so as to deliver a “truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented, and sustainable support to Member States in implementing joint commitments to address the world drug problem, including the operational recommendations contained in the outcome document of the 2016 United Nations Special Session on the World Drug Problem”. With a view to ensuring coherent efforts to achieve this commitment, the CEB also established a UN-system Coordination Task Team composed of all interested UN entities, including UN-Habitat, to ensure coherent efforts to realise the commitments of the UN System Common Position and coordinating data collection to promote scientific, evidence-based implementation of international commitments. As part of the actions contributing to the Task Team of UN

Entities, the One UN Resident Coordinating System at country level and to the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I have signed an MOU with the Executive Director of UNODC towards joint programming on Safer Cities in which we shall align, measure and monitor implementation actions on the prevention of urban crime and violence in select countries worldwide. In connection to this, I am glad to inform you that Member States have endorsed the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023 with urban safety as a cross-cutting theme to be addressed through the reduction of spatial inequalities, enhancing city prosperity and urban resilience; and through mitigating and preventing urban crisis.

My second point is on the role of cities in relation to urban drug policy, public safety and health – Research has shown that poorly planned urbanization in many cities in the developing world, has contributed to rising income inequalities articulated through growing social discontent, mistrust in democratic institutions and rule of law, social unrest, conflict, crime and violence. These inequalities are evident in the urbanization of the city, materialized in urban segregation patterns that enlarge physical and symbolical distances between citizens, creating slums, ghettos, barrios and favelas – spaces in the city that have come to be marked by a relatively high incidence of crime and violence.

However, cities as the level of government closest to the people have had a history of innovation in policies. If we get our cities right, through holistic and sustainable development plans that fully integrate crime and violence prevention policies, evidence shows that cities should be able to grow in more inclusive and connected ways and realize the delivery of programmes, actions and services at the neighbourhood level that impact on the social, cultural, economic causes of crime and violence. This is affirmed by Member States at the recently concluded 1st UN-Habitat Assembly in May this year in Nairobi, Kenya that adopted UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements. These guidelines have drawn on promising practices of cities around the world that have benefitted from 23 years of technical assistance from UN-Habitat’s Safer Cities Programme. These guidelines aim to advance the role of cities in the implementation of prevention policies and strategies at the local level, in collaboration with sub-national and national governments. We urge cities to fully take advantage of these guidelines to progressively shift the local political and institutional cultures from a reactionary approach to drugs and public insecurity to one that allows for the co-production of safety for all by tackling the causes of drug abuse and insecurity in our cities and human settlements through the reduction of spatial inequalities, enhancing city livelihoods, prosperity and urban resilience; and through mitigating and preventing urban crisis. In this way, the alternative development solution of promoting urban safety through well-planned urbanisation provides **the opportunities to lift millions out of poverty in cities, leaving no one behind and towards a shared prosperity.**

It is for this reason that my third message is a reiteration of my commitment to a safer, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. UN-Habitat is committed to improving the safety of cities and all human settlements building on its tested approach on safer cities. Together, we must build on the lessons from practice on the role of cities in preventing drug-related crimes, enhancing public safety and the health of all citizens in the best way possible. UN-Habitat will take the opportunity of this significant platform to fast track the potential and critical role of cities and human settlements to enhance urban drug policies, public safety and the health agenda!

I would like to close with sincere congratulations to the Global Commission on Drug Policy and organisers of this Consultation and the Fast Track Cities Conference and invite

you to further consider promoting this dialogue at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum which will take place in Abu Dhabi on 18 to 20 February next year.

Thank you.