

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

**Infrastructure, Cities and Local Action (ICLA) Coalition session on
“Partnerships for Ambition: Unlocking the Full Potential of Local Climate Action” at
the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019**

Sunday 22 September 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York

**Your excellency, the Vice-Minister of Environment and Urbanization of the Republic of
Turkey, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Emir Birpinar
Your excellency, the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, my dear sister Martha
Delgado Peralta
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good afternoon!

Before I come to the question posed to me, let me start expressing my deep appreciation for your engagement and your commitment to the initiatives that have been developed over the past year or so, under the “Infrastructure, Cities and Local Action” track, which UN-Habitat was privileged to support alongside Kenya and Turkey, the co-leads of this track.

Now, we all know that cities are the hubs for climate solutions, where young people converge, markets flourish and entrepreneurs devise new inventions. But we must also remember that over 55% of today world’s population lives in cities, a figure that is forecasted to reach 70% by 2050. A majority of urban dwellers lives along coastlines, vulnerable to sea-level rise, flooding and extreme-weather events. Accelerated climate action in cities, by city, sub-national and national governments, is central to realising the 1.5C target, as well as to building the resilience of some of the most climate-vulnerable communities on this planet.

The New Urban Agenda was adopted by member states in Quito in October 2016 at the Habitat III conference. It builds on SDG 11, but addresses a wider range of urbanization and human settlements issues and details the implementation of the urban dimension of the SDGs and Agenda 2030. It provides a spatial framework for the delivery of SDGs in urban areas. Most importantly, the New Urban Agenda makes several references to the interplay between urbanisation, sustainability and climate change and identifies several elements of effective implementation to achieve these combined goals.

We have used the framework provided by the New Urban Agenda to develop our new Strategic Plan 2020-23, which is focused firmly on impact, and has four areas of emphasis – reduced spatial inequality, increased shared prosperity, stronger climate action, and more effective crisis response and recovery. This Strategic Plan was adopted by the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in May this year.

Cities around the world are the “main cause of climate change” but they also offer a part of the solution to reducing the harmful greenhouse gases that are causing global temperatures to rise. For this reason, in line with the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, in the context of our new Strategic Plan, UN-Habitat intend to use strategically designed processes which combines policy advice, technical support, advocacy, thematic expertise, knowledge

production and sharing of best practices on climate action in cities and human settlements.

Ladies and gentlemen:

We have seen the devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas earlier this month. I was in Mozambique after Cyclone Idai in March and witnessed first-hand what extreme weather events can do to coastal settlements and regions, to housing, infrastructure, and of course to the most vulnerable urban and rural communities which are already struggling to cope with poverty, informality and spatial and social inequality in all its forms. And this pattern is seen not only in Africa or the Pacific or the Caribbean – it is repeated across Asia, the Middle-East, Europe, and the Americas.

No continent is exempt, no country fully protected, from the impacts of climate change. But there are some spaces and some groups of people, who are already vulnerable, who bear the brunt of these impacts much more than others. For these people, climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction, environmental sustainability, reduction in poverty and inequality, increased access to housing and basic services including mobility and public space, are all inseparable elements that contribute to the survival, resilience and prosperity of their families and communities.

This is the reason why UN-Habitat firmly believes in integrated action. We believe that zero-carbon buildings, climate-friendly transport, and climate resilience of the poorest urban communities, go hand-in-hand. One cannot be achieved without the other. All of these need good planning and effective policies. And none of these can be realised without access to finance and mobilization of – and support to – cities and sub-national governments.

Excellencies:

Today marks a key milestone in our journey together as collaborators in the ICLA track. I must thank you for your leadership and your support. We will have a chance to develop these ideas further during COP25 in Chile in December, and at the 10th session of the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in February 2020, to which I would like to warmly invite you all.

I also look forward to working with all of you in the coming year and during the “Decade of Action” 2020-2030. Together, we will translate these ideas into visions, visions into actions, and actions into reality!

I thank you for your attention.