

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

C40 World Mayors Summit Copenhagen “Our Urban Future: How national and local governments can work together for prosperous, climate-safe cities”

Friday 10 October 2019 at Tivoli Congress Center, Copenhagen

**The Right Honourable Claire Perry O’Neill, MP, UK-nominated COP26 President
Mayor Mohammed Adjei Sowah, Mayor of Accra
Sheela Patel, Chair of the Board, Shack/Slum Dwellers International Ani
Dasgupta, Global Director, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities
Nick Godfrey and Sarah Colenbrander from the Coalition for Urban Transitions
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning!

I am very pleased to be here and to share with you some thoughts on the importance of this collaborative, symbiotic relationship between local and national governments for prosperous and climate-safe cities.

But first, I must say that UN-Habitat has greatly appreciated being a part of the multi-partner effort that has led to the development of this report of the Coalition of Urban Transitions – “Climate Emergency, Urban Opportunity.” Such a detailed, well-researched case for the national development benefits of addressing climate change in human settlements was desperately needed. Thanks to all who made this happen.

The report’s message that local and national governments must work together effectively to deliver decarbonised cities resonates well with our own experience gathered over several decades from working in the field. The importance of a just urban transition, that ensures a zero-carbon future and improves the lives of the poor, is – from our perspective - one of the report’s most important recommendations.

We must also use the key recommendations of this report to guide the implementation of several initiatives developed under the ICLA (Infrastructure, Cities and Local Action) track for the Climate Action Summit, including the Zero Carbon Buildings, Action for Climate Friendly Transport, and Building Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor. Impact at scale cannot be achieved in any of these areas unless national and local governments work together. And decentralised finance – money that reaches the local governments for impactful climate action – will also not become a reality without national governments’ support and serious policy reform!

At UN-Habitat, our cities and climate change portfolio has grown exponentially over the past decade to now include wide-ranging normative and operational work on both mitigation and adaptation. From an initial project funded by a single donor worth USD 6 million in 2008, we have 15 projects funded by a series of donors worth USD 63.7 million in 2019. During this time, we have supported a large number of cities and smaller human settlements in 26 developing countries to take one or more steps in the climate action planning process.

As a result of the growing demand and donor confidence in our climate work, strengthened climate action and improved urban environment is now one of the four main priorities for our new Strategic Plan 2020-23, including issues of greenhouse gas emissions, air quality, resource efficiency, protection of ecological assets and adaptation of communities to climate change. We also hope to make this a central element of the conversations at the 10th session of the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in February 2020, to which you are all warmly invited.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I can say with confidence that this report will provide the evidence, the arguments and the way forward, for stronger and more effective multi-level governance for climate action, with cities and human settlements at the heart of such efforts. UN-Habitat is a champion of multi-level governance and works closely with local and regional governments, national governments and international networks of cities and local governments, to ensure scaled up, sustainable impact of all our work. This is demonstrated, for example, through the Urban-LEDS programme implemented in 16 cities across 8 countries, with funding from the European Commission, and in partnership with ICLEI.

We promise to partner with all of you to develop policies, plans and designs for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities, that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change. As the Secretary-General has said, “It is a race we can win! It is a race we MUST win!”

Thank you for your attention!