

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

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 20/20 Forum at the Seventh Asia-Pacific Urban Forum

Monday 14 October 2019 at SETIA Spice Convention Centre, Penang

**Honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good afternoon.

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the winners of UNESCO Heritage Awards and also all winners of the UNESCO Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, which is now in its 20th year.

I would also like to convey a very special thanks to His Excellency Mr. Chow Kon Yeow, Chief Minister of Penang and Mr. Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Executive Director of Think City, for their unparalleled support towards the Asia-Pacific Heritage 20/20 Forum.

I would like to extend my utmost appreciation to UNESCO, especially to Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director UNESCO Bangkok, for their organization of the event in conjunction with APUF7. This is truly a demonstration of the One UN Spirit.

Thank you to all the UNESCO Heritage Awards Jury Members, donors, secretariat and publication teams; thank you for all participants joining us this week for the Asia-Pacific Heritage 20/20 Forum and APUF7.

Excellencies,

The 20th anniversary marks a critical milestone in reflecting on the achievements and lessons learnt from the UNESCO Heritage Awards programme. In that time, I can look back at the positive improvements that the Awards' mission of raising awareness about the importance of heritage and by extension, cultural identity has been.

For UN-Habitat, heritage, urban renewal and regeneration have deep linkages to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In everything from our spatial development plans, public spaces, employment opportunities, tourism development, the cultural heritage of a city defines our urban identity. It also helps communities redefine their economic base and provide wider opportunities for social improvement.

Urban regeneration is a key flagship programme in the UN-Habitat's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. This is in recognition to our collective contributions to the urban development discourse. Now, we really have a strong reason to work together and develop joint programmes to support sustainable urban regeneration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking all of you, including my old friend Dr Richard Engelhard, the founder of the Awards, for your dedicated commitment to ensuring

that we value our collective urban and cultural heritage. The awards have come a long way, from the celebration of the Blue Mansion, here in Penang to the Blue House in Hong Kong. Indeed, this educational mission of UNESCO is the foundation for our future collaboration to mainstream culture based urban development and regeneration at the highest level of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Last but not least, I would also like to extend my warmest invitation to you to participate at the Tenth World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi from 8 – 13 February 2020. Indeed, the overall theme of the World Urban Forum will be Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation, where six different dialogues will be held in order to discuss policy recommendations on the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda. I hope to see you all in Abu Dhabi next February.

Thank you so much.