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**PRESS RELEASE**

**UN-Habitat and UNOSSC commit to stepping up South-South cooperation on urban issues**

**18 July 2020** – UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) providing a framework for cooperation to facilitate and strengthen their joint work in mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation to support the New Urban Agenda and urban-related components of the Sustainable Development Goals .

The MOU was signed virtually by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Director of UNOSSC and Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation, Jorge Chediek.

Building on their technical cooperation initiatives including pilot projects, UN-Habitat and UNOSSC have committed to increasing the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation into the urban sector, involving governments, local authorities, the private sector and civil society across the Global South. This will also include resource mobilization.

The MOU focuses on four interconnected areas: (a) post-COVID-19 collaboration supporting cities in targeted developing countries; (b) capacity development and horizontal learning; (c) urban basic services focusing on water and sanitation; and (d) advocacy and inter-agency collaboration in the promotion of the New Urban Agenda and urban-related dimensions of SDGs in the Global South.

UN-Habitat research shows that over 95 per cent of COVID-19 infections are in urban areas. Over 1 billion people live in informal settlements and slums in overcrowded and inadequate housing, and 2.4 billion people lack adequate access to safe water and sanitation. The effects of unplanned urbanization in different regions of the world have been exacerbated by the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, transforming the way in which cities operate and how citizens live, work, socialize and interact. Cities and countries across the Global South have also seen a decline in international funding for development in recent years.

UN-Habitat’s Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif reiterated that the impact of COVID-19 will be the most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas. “Urgent action is needed to help the most vulnerable urban populations to stay safe and healthy as measures to slow transmission such as physical distancing, self-quarantine or community-wide lockdowns are almost impossible in these overcrowded areas,” she said.

Director of UNOSSC Jorge Chediek welcomed the signing of the MOU with UN-Habitat as a concrete follow-up to the outcome of the 2019 second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

“We must seize this opportunity to scale up South-South and triangular sharing of policies, knowledge and solutions in participatory urban planning and management”, he said. “Every local community, no matter its size, has valuable development knowledge to share.”

In light of the ongoing United Nations system-wide reform, South-South cooperation takes on greater significance, providing new means of achieving greater coherence as all stakeholders, including regional institutions and country teams learn from and work with one another across borders.

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