

**Statement by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif  
On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations**

On this occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, we must not forget the good work of past generations, whose commitment to peace and a ‘rules based’ co-existence of nations has lifted millions out of poverty and misery.

COVID-19, like other global crises, is bigger than any one nation and reinforces the unique role of the United Nations to bring the world together as one. The United Nations has made significant progress over the decades in improving peace and security, poverty reduction, clean water and improved sanitation, gender equality, and other critical areas of development.

In 2000, the world was introduced to the ground-breaking concept of the Millennium Development Goals. Fifteen years later, we adopted the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with clear targets to be achieved by 2030. The New Urban Agenda helps nations harness urbanization as a catalytic force to deliver the SDGs.

In the past 75 years, the world has come a long way in our commitment to ensure adequate shelter for all. The built environment and the rapid rate of urbanization are now changing the very nature of the planet. By 2050, 70 per cent of humanity will live in urban areas and this year 95 per cent of all COVID-19 cases have been found in our towns and cities. Our fate is inextricably bound up with the places we call home - be it an informal settlement, a village or a city.

No journey is smooth. At this point in our history, the achievement of the SDGs may seem far away. Yet, I believe we can reach these Goals by empowering individuals, communities, neighbourhoods and cities to take small steps together.

We need to be inspired by past generations, we need to harness the drive of our youth, capture the wisdom of our elders, and encourage innovation and creativity at all levels.

If humankind is to survive, we need a global revolution of empathy. The next 75 years will be crucial as future generations will depend on us to make the right decisions today.

Above all, we need action on the ground, advocacy in the virtual world and commitment to do whatever it takes to leave future generations a better world, where no one and no place is left behind.