

## Foreword



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**Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
Under-Secretary-General and  
Executive Director of UN-Habitat

Cities and sustainable urban development are central to the sustainable development in the world, underpinned by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. From my experience as Mayor in Malaysia, I understand that access to finance is critical when developing and ensuring the long term sustainability of a city. Cities can be engines of productivity, but only when their development is properly planned and governed. This includes aligning spatial and economic development to facilitate access to finance. This can be own revenues, national government transfers, and external finance; all necessary as city managers consider development projects, matching public funds to private financing to sustain critical infrastructure and services. The importance of functional governance has been

verified by COVID-19: in the recent UN-Habitat's report on Cities and Pandemics, we recommend strengthening access to municipal finance enabling city leaders to build a new urban economy that reduces disaster risk as well as addressing climate change by developing nature-based solutions and investing in sustainable infrastructure to enable low carbon transport. This is even more important in the Global South especially regarding the surge of population growth and urbanisation estimated for the next few decades.

UN-Habitat is pleased to conduct this initiative of *Increasing financial capacities of cities from developing countries to deliver productive and sustainable urban development*. For this timely endeavour we have convened our sister entities at the United Nations,

and other partners who complement our expertise in financing sustainable urban development. We are grateful to Professor Sir Paul Collier of University of Oxford for chairing the Advisory Group, to all members of this group for lending their expertise to our joint effort, to Professor Edward L. Glaeser of Harvard University for his personal engagement along with his team of Cities that Work at the International Growth Centre, and to Professor Anthony Venables of University of Oxford who managed the IGC team. This work would have not been successful without valuable contributions of the Directorate-General of International Partnership of the European Commission, and the European Investment Bank. We hope to continue the work with an extended group of partners in the next phase of the initiative.