

Remarks/Speech Opening	“Around a city in 8 QUESTIONS”	Monday, 16/02/21 9.30-10.30 am, Online (Katowice)
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**Honourable Mayor,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

A very good morning to you all!

I am honoured to participate in the Series “Around a City in 8 Questions” and would like to start by thanking the Urban Land Institute Poland for organizing this event and especially the Mayor of Katowice for leading the important discussions that will take place with local governments in the next few months in preparation for the 11th session of the World Urban Forum.

As the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, I would also like to express my appreciation to the Government of Poland, for the commitment to sustainable urban development and strongly welcome the interest and commitment to host the next World Urban Forum in Katowice in June 2022.

The World Urban Forum is the premier global conference on urban issues. The latest edition in Abu Dhabi gathered over 13,000 participants and 30,000 cumulative visits across 6 days. The Forum is an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the commitments we would need to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals. I believe WUF11 can set a new benchmark for sustainable urbanization in Poland and offer a unique opportunity for local governments to build strong networks and partnerships for action.

Urbanisation and cities are considered as an entry point for the 17 SDGs because their density, economies of scale and proximity are akin to an invisible string that brings all the development goals together. There are several risks and opportunities for sustainable urban development associated with the trends of urbanization, and the United Nations, with UN-Habitat at the lead, needs to look ahead in order to grasp their long-term impact on cities and people.

COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented global impact on cities across the world, with the poor and the vulnerable people being the most adversely affected. The covid-19 pandemic has prompted the need to rethink urban planning and development strategies.

At the same time, local authorities including mayors are on the front lines. UN-Habitat has worked directly with local authorities and understands how they must balance bringing in measures to stop the pandemic from spreading while ensuring communities have access to health care, food supplies and social services for the most vulnerable. Looking forward, we will support many cities to develop innovative recovery strategies that focus on resilient levels of urban compactness and connectivity, as well as access to all basic services and infrastructure.

As you may recall, a year ago, WUF10 was framed as a call to action for all stakeholders to ramp up their efforts for driving sustainable urban development in the Decade of Action. This call has become even more

important in today's world as we tackle a situation where global inequalities have become more pronounced and challenges to sustainable development are compounded.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall those commitments and invite you all partners to share your progress in putting them into practice. We encourage partners to report on their achievements and share lessons learned, using UN-Habitat's Urban Agenda Platform online.

At WUF11, we will build even greater momentum, celebrate successes, explore innovation, and continue cultivating a whole-of-society approach to achieving the SDGs. Partners will showcase the creative ways they are following through on the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions and innovating to tackle the most pressing urban challenges including the pandemic.

The cities we build today are tomorrow's heritage. UN-Habitat is committed to working with its partners in this Decade of Action to build more inclusive, sustainable cities and societies that are resilient to pandemics, climate change, and other global challenges.

Thank you once again to the City of Katowice for taking the lead and the Urban Land Institute Poland for organising this session, which creates a strong momentum for collaboration and action towards the preparation for WUF11.

Thank you very much. Dziękuję (jen-koo)!

Prepared by	Edited by	Status	Version	Word Count	Estimated Time (125 words/min)
Fernanda Lonardoni	Neil; Runze	Finalized	15 Feb 22:34	641 Words	5 Minutes