

# Vision Statement

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**As we enter the second year of this United Nations’ Decade of Action, the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminds us that we need to ‘turbo-charge’ our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. More importantly, we need to deliver the goals as One United Nations and strive to pass the finishing line with no one and no place left behind.**

*If we do not bridge the gap between rural and urban areas; if we cannot build bridges to connect north and south; if we allow history to prevent us to achieve justice for all; then the future will be hostage to the past*

Inequality in our cities and communities manifest itself in slums and homelessness. Whether we live in the rich or developing world, we are all subject to the same global economic system that leaves entire communities behind. If we do not bridge the gap between rural and urban areas; if we cannot build bridges to connect north and south; if we allow history to prevent us to achieve justice for all; then the future will be hostage to the past.

In my second term, I look to the people we serve for inspiration. When I see what our colleagues have achieved providing shelter and homes for people in greatest need in various places; in Mosul, Iraq where we work with the community and UN partners to clear landmines to recreate a public park; to design and build schools in Mozambique, the only structures that can withstand hurricanes; to develop planning tools to ensure women and girls are included in the making of cities of the future; and when we help mayors to find financing solutions to invest in inclusive public spaces and support for displaced persons, all of this means sustainable urbanisation as encapsulated in the New Urban Agenda can be an accelerator to achieve the SDGs.

I have five broad aspirations building on the work we have achieved together in the past four years. They include:

- (i) the realisation of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, which I believe Member States will allow us to extend by two years to align with the QCPR timeline;
- (ii) the strengthening of UN-Habitat as a thought leader and centre of excellence through re-doubling of our reform efforts;
- (iii) ensuring long-term sustainability of the Programme through consistent annual financing by Member States, donors and the Sustainable Human Settlements Foundation;
- (iv) turbo-charging our facilitation role in localising the SDGs whilst working with local governments; and
- (v) strengthening our field presence to ensure normative and operational guidance delivers impact to the communities we serve.

## i. The Strategic Plan 2020-2023

The immediate future will be largely shaped by how we live with Covid-19 and how we recover from its socio-economic impact. The UN-Habitat Strategic Plan, which aims to deliver a better urban future through policy advisory, normative guidance, technical assistance and the advocacy of a rights-based approach to human settlements development remains robust. Nonetheless, following guidance from Member States, and based upon data & evidence, we need to adapt it to the immediate needs of cities and communities both in developing and developed countries. UN-Habitat will continue to work with the rest of the UN system to ensure that we find innovative ways to live within our ecological limits, devise strategies to mitigate against the further erosion of our natural environment whilst preparing city managers to adapt against the continuing challenges of climate change. We reiterate our commitment to help Member States provide shelter for all; ensure a rights-based approach to land management; and the provision of adequate & affordable housing as an important dimension of social protection whilst striving towards sustainable urbanisation. UN-Habitat will continue to advocate for and strengthen the Strategic Plan's flagship programmes, which will deliver the greatest positive impact to the communities where we operate. I would also like to reiterate the



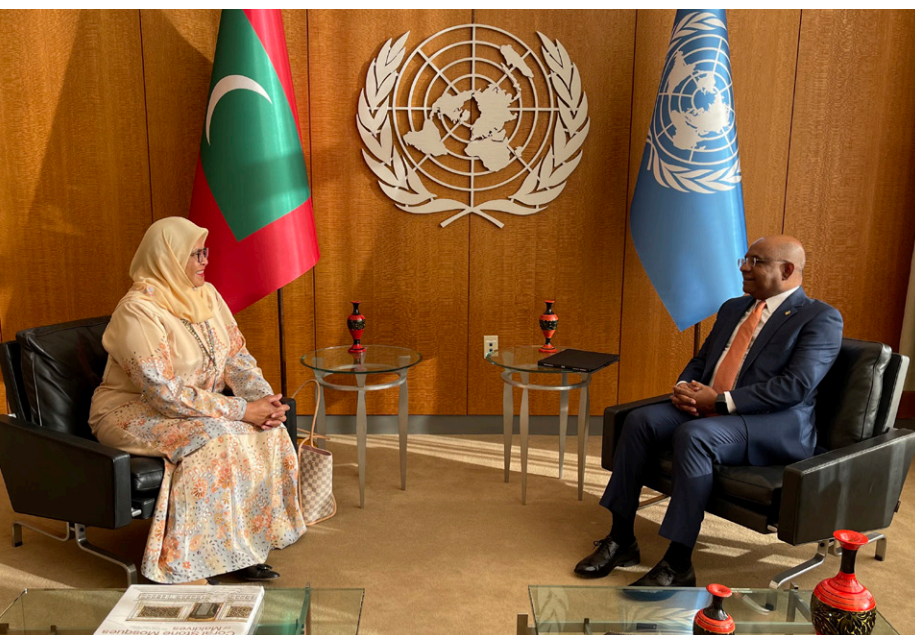
UN-Habitat Executive Director Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif with UN-Habitat staff at the town hall in Nairobi, Kenya 24 January 2018 © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

importance of our climate adaptation work and in collaboration with a wide range of partners, meet commitments made to support Member States in our collective effort to achieve greater equity through adapting to a carbon neutral future.

## ii. Reforms at UN-Habitat

In the past four years, UN-Habitat has been able to better position itself in the crowded field of sustainable urbanisation through a 'whole of house' approach. A change of leadership was the first step towards a broader re-positioning of the Programme within the UN system as well as with Member States, city managers, civil society, academia and stakeholders. UN-Habitat's position is inextricably tied to the New Urban Agenda, SDG 11 and the broader mandate of human settlements. In order to be ahead of the curve, we have had to restructure the Programme, better integrate the normative and operational functions as well as strengthen our intergovernmental work. Going forward, we will continue to strengthen the reform efforts to ensure that we lead with innovative ideas & urban solutions; that we persuade governments and stakeholders to translate policy guidance into practice and that we better

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The Executive Director of UN-Habitat meets the President of the United Nations General Assembly Abdulla Shahid.

communicate the impact of the Programme to ensure others get onto the bandwagon of Local 2030. We will do this by further delegating authority to our field operations, improving transparency through better monitoring & compliance, and ensure we create a more equal & inclusive work place.

### iii. Financial Sustainability of the Programme

To achieve our ambitious goals, UN-Habitat needs adequate and consistent resources both financially and in talent development. In the last four years, we have been able to pick all the low hanging fruits through a combination of closing out grants and reducing costs. In 2021, the Executive Board approved the budget of UN-Habitat with a phased approach to its implementation. This ensures that we operate within the envelop of the actual income received instead of relying solely on projected income. To appeal for increased regular budget (RB) contributions, we have been working with the Controller's Office to better align the Programme's normative intergovernmental functions with the posts allocated under RB. A cost reduction plan is also in place whereby a prioritisation plan has been endorsed by the Executive Board.

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To better allocate programme support cost, a cost recovery policy is being put in place. I have also established a Budget Steering Committee that will advise me on the management of our resources to meet the needs of the Programme. All of these efforts deal with the established income streams of the UN. Thinking out of the box, soft-earmarked funds from two Member States have been put in place to provide much-needed support for normative & operational functions of the Programme. To ensure stability, the Sustainable Human Settlements Foundation, a third party endowment, has been set up to generate stable soft-earmarked support for the Programme especially our field operations and Local 2030 commitments.



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**

### iv. Localising the SDGs

UN-Habitat continues to bridge national and local; it is the designated co-chair of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the Future of Cities. In our GA mandates and UN-Habitat Assembly resolutions, Member States have provided us with the responsibility of translating policy into practice. We are the main focal point of the UN system with local governments with the New Urban Agenda's implementation dependent on an 'all round stakeholder' engagement approach. We also aim to strengthen the engagement of Local and Regional Governments in the work of UN-Habitat and the United Nations through the creation of an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Government as proposed in the SG's Our Common Agenda. In short, to ensure that no one and no place is left behind, we need to advocate, facilitate and invest in localising the SDGs. We have the premier advocacy platform for the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11 through the World Urban Forum, the World Urban

Campaign, the World Habitat Day and World Cities Day. We facilitate cooperation and partnership through the New Urban Agenda platform, supporting local governments to carry out voluntary local reviews and from there identify catalytic urban interventions that will help steer them towards sustainable urbanisation. Finally, with the support of Member States and donors, we invest in cities and communities through policy advisory, normative guidance and technical assistance to bring about positive impact on the ground. All of this is encapsulated in the SDG Cities programme, that provides a sustainability index for human settlements.

## **v. Strengthening our Field Presence**

We are ultimately as good as our impact on the ground. In this next term, the aim is to comprehensively improve and strengthen our delivery on the ground. UN-Habitat's position within the UN system, its standing with Member States and its global relevance will be determined by the impact of our policy advisory, normative guidance and technical assistance on the ground. Additional funding from Member States and the Sustainable Human Settlements Foundation (endowment) will be invested in strengthening our field presence, supporting the UN system through our contributions to the urban perspective in Common Country Assessments and supporting the implementation of the UN Systemwide Policy on Sustainable Urbanisation. We will do this by streamlining our field presence, ensuring inter-regional advisory leads to better

programmatic initiatives and that we secure co-investments to scale up the urban solutions so needed to realise the potential of sustainable urbanisation. Our dedication to pro-poor policies, the least developed countries and the small island developing states; as well as fostering south south cooperation will remain the bedrock of our presence in the field. Finally, we will always dedicate ourselves to the nucleus of our mandate, which is the provision of shelter and sustainable human settlements particularly when it is most needed in fragile states, humanitarian situations and, increasingly, in our own towns and cities that need to adapt to climate emergencies, conflicts and inequalities.

## **Conclusion**

In the next 24 months, let us rededicate ourselves to the wider vision of the Secretary-General, who has exhorted us to be ambitious and pragmatic. As we work to implement the Strategic Plan, as we carry out reform efforts, as we strive to better communicate the impact of our work; and as we find innovative ways to sustain the Programme financially, let us never forget our commitment to gender mainstreaming, greater geographic balance and our commitment to uphold the UN Charter, which in turn, makes us international civil servants. It is a privilege and an honour to serve beside all of you in this second term as Executive Director.

**Together we will travel far.**

Asante Sana

23 January 2022

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