

First session of the Executive Board for the year 2022

29-31 March 2022

Closing Remarks by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat

Thank you Excellency Chair

Distinguished delegates

Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and gentlemen

1. Let me thank H.E. Ambassador Marek for his wisdom, leadership and invaluable ability to adapt to the unpredictable; all good qualities that have brought us safely to the conclusion of this very extraordinary first session of the Executive Board. Ambassador Marek is a revolutionary who has succeeded in heightening the substantive tone of the Executive Board sessions and I am grateful to him and the bureau for the good stewardship of the deliberations, debates and discussions. Thank you for your engagement and leadership Excellency Chair.
2. I cannot proceed with my observations of this Executive Board meeting without my greatest appreciation for the bureau members, who have provided invaluable advice, guidance and critical feedback as we learn to adapt to Covid-19, resource scarcity and political instability. Your support is most appreciated.
3. We would not be here without the immense patience, skillful diplomacy and excellent management skills of the Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Work Programme & Budget, her excellency Mme Shaklin Syeda, the High Commissioner of Pakistan and my dear sister. Thank you for guiding us through some exciting but challenging moments. I am happy to say that through your dedication, this session of the Executive Board has been able to preserve the dignity of our deliberations focusing on our mandate as we serve the most vulnerable in our cities and communities.

4. Not forgetting His Excellency distinguished delegate from Switzerland and the Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement Policy, Mr Patrick Elgoff. Your leadership in setting a constructive tone and a firm foundation for Member State deliberations on the role of stakeholders in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is very refreshing. I look forward to our conversations about the subject matter and thank you for helping us work better with partners and stakeholders to implement our mandate.

Distinguished delegates

5. Please accept my grateful thanks to the members of the Executive Board. Your engagement with us has elevated the mandate of UN-Habitat and I am happy that so many Member States have dedicated so much time to attend this Executive Board meeting from capital, in New York and closest to my heart, delegates from Nairobi. You have truly preserved the Nairobi spirit whereby we put the most pressing global issues related to urbanisation at the centre of our deliberations.

6. Let me share with you the final statistics of this first Executive Board session for 2022. We had 8 ministers, 1 vice minister, 70 PRs, 57 DPRs, 223 government officials and 52 other partners. We had 35 Members of the Executive Board attend and also 60 other Member States registering with us. Thank you all for your constructive contributions.

7. Let me now proceed to share some of my observations. I believe this session of the Executive Board has been very substantive discussions on a wide range of issues. Member States were able to provide their views about the centrality of the UN-Habitat mandate related to the implementation of the NUA towards the achievement of the SDGs.

8. Some of the highlights of the discussion include the following:

- (i) The recognition by Member States of the importance of Housing, Cities Action on Climate change and localising the SDGs, as priority entry points for the next Strategic Plan and to follow up of key elements of the Secretary-General's report Our Common Agenda.
- (ii) The importance of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework, which was recently endorsed by United Nations Statistical Commission, as part of the harmonised global urban UN system wide strategy and related regional, national and subnational urban programmes; and the need for capacity development to scale the rollout of the framework.
- (iii) The demonstration of UN-Habitat's strong experience and effective tools to strengthen the humanitarian and peace nexus at country level and UN-Habitat's role in urban crisis response, in line with 4th Domain of Change of our Strategic Plan.

9. Distinguished delegates, I hear you loud and clear about the need to strengthen our core capacity here at Nairobi and I am committed to ensuring that the use of different funding resources is aligned with the intergovernmental and normative functions of the Programme. I look forward to working closely with Kenya and my sister Ambassador Jean Kimani to jointly raise resources for the Kenya country programme as well as our offices here. A strong UN-Habitat at Nairobi is the basis for a strong UN-Habitat in Africa.

10. I also hear Member States that the rate of urbanisation and the challenges associated with it is very great. I thank Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Yemen, South Sudan, Brazil, Chile, Slovak Republic, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia for your interventions. UN-Habitat cannot be everywhere but with your support we can be in strategic locations to assist you with our expertise and normative guidance. What we need to do is to work together to develop business plans and comprehensive proposals that is attractive to donors. This will help raise multi-year funding to ensure we build greater sustainability into our presence in the field.

11. The High Level Meeting in New York is an opportunity for all of us to work together to advocate for our mandate. It is also important for us to be able to ensure that we get guidance from Member States to understand how we can better serve you. I look forward to working closely with all Member States, your representatives in New York and in capital to ensure we best support your participation at the High Level Meeting. I rely on all of you, resident missions in Nairobi for your important coordinating role as you know how much we need your support.

12. My commitment to reforms and alignment with the wider UN reforms remains strong. I am very reinvigorated that with your support, we are able to improve our effectiveness and efficiency. We are keen to do better. I am heartened to learn that Member States are willing to help us both in cash and in kind. Once again, please rest assure that our commitment to ensuring a safe work environment continues. I am also pleased with our finance performance as shared with all of you earlier today. In fact, I had just received the finance report from UNON yesterday. We know where we need to do better and with your support, we can do it.

13. Excellencies, as you can see, we have done everything that you have wanted us to do. Thank you for the endorsement of my request for a realistic and scalable budget for 2023 core funding. I am not taking any pledges for granted. I am truly appreciative of the support from Mexico and the USD 3 million pledge for 2022. This means that we have USD 9 million to raise including an additional USD 3 million to repay debts incurred in 2017.

14. You have all congratulated me and I am grateful for this second term. As a woman, I know that every day is a challenge. You can say that women leaders are used to multi-tasking. However, please help me by giving me a level playing field to achieve the targets that you have set for me. All I ask for is that Member States come together to support the budget they have approved and let us aim to ensure we are able to scale up the 2023 budget because the mandate deserves your support.

15. Finally, let me thank all Member States, stakeholders and my colleagues for your continued support. It is rare that substantive issues, beyond protocol and ceremony, trumps political considerations. This means you believe in Habitat's mandate and the role we play to support the wider efforts of the UN to deliver on the promise of sustainable urbanisation.

Mr Chair,

16. Thank you once again and let me congratulate you on successfully steering us the Programme through the challenges of Covid-19, climate change and political instability. I look forward to working closely with you and the Government of Poland to welcome delegates to the 11th session of the World Urban Forum. Let me also thank the out-going bureau members including the Ambassador of Chile, France, Pakistan and Egypt.

17. Let me welcome the Ambassador of Brazil, a friend of UN-Habitat and in-coming Chair of the Executive Board. Let me also congratulate the in-coming bureau members including Poland, Kenya, Pakistan and France. We welcome Kenya to the bureau and welcome back very familiar faces. This continuity and institutional memory is very helpful and I look forward to your guidance.

18. Finally, let me thank my colleagues including Mr Raf Tuts, who led the preparations for the Executive Board meeting, Mr Chris Mensah the Secretary of the Governing Bodies and Staff members who have made it possible for us to support Member States at this Executive Board meeting. I also thank UNON and conference services for their support and also the Joint Medical Services who have provided us with guidance to keep us all safe.

Thank you.

Asante Sana