

**Statement of s. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN-Habitat at the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in New York on 28 April 2022**

*H.E., Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly,*

*H.E., Mr. Collen Kelapile, President of ECOSOC,*

*H.E. Ms. Veronika Remišová, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Investments, Regional Development and Informatization, the Slovak Republic*

*Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed*

*H.E. Mr. Dario Herrera, Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Ecuador.*

*H.E. Mr. James W. Macharia, Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing, Urban Development and Public Works, the Republic of Kenya.*

*Distinguished Heads of Delegations,*

*Distinguished Mayors and associations of local and regional governments,*

*Professionals, business leaders, grassroots, youth, and other constituencies of the New Urban Agenda,*

*Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and gentlemen,*

I wish to join others in thanking the General Assembly for passing the resolution to host this High-Level Meeting, to review the implementation for the New Urban Agenda, and the President of the General Assembly for calling for this meeting and agreeing to establish the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization. Through your leadership, Mr. President, and the work of the members of the Advisory Committee, we have succeeded in aligning the various building blocks leading up to this High-Level Meeting. I am convinced that this will enrich our deliberations today.

The building blocks include the Quadrennial Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development in each of the five regions, and last week's ECOSOC special meeting on sustainable urbanisation and the New Urban Agenda.

Additionally, throughout this week, Member States and key constituencies have reinforced a key feature of the New Urban Agenda, which is the transformative nature of sustainable urbanisation. These include events on financing climate adaptation, urban resilience in Small Island Developing States, promoting housing and ending homelessness, and the World Assembly on local and regional governments.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

As we commence our deliberations today, I wish to note the key recommendations of the pre-session document, the Quadrennial Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. These call upon Member States to position the New Urban Agenda as a catalyst for the achievement of global goals, and to incorporate lessons learned from COVID-19 to ensure a just and green recovery.

The Quadrennial Report also calls upon Member States to integrate the provision of adequate and affordable housing as a driver of equitable development. Along with healthcare, jobs, education, and digital access; housing is central to a package of social protections systems. Member States can achieve this by making urban policy a central feature to comprehensively address climate mitigation and adaptation. By aligning spatial and economic development we can protect biodiversity and reduce pollution. We must ensure no one, including the smallest of God's creations is left behind.

Further, the Quadrennial Report recommends that we identify ways to amplify the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. To do this effectively, I call upon all Member States to strengthen multi-level governance by engaging local governments in inter-governmental and national planning processes. And perhaps most critically, to finance the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

I look forward to the guidance from member states on their views about how we can take these recommendations forward. As His Excellency the President of the General Assembly has conveyed, the High-level Meeting is action oriented. We need to build upon the collective energy of the Member States, local governments, professionals, grassroots, private business leaders, and my colleagues in the United Nations gathered here today to help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

As the custodian of New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat has anticipated some of the recommendations outlined in the Quadrennial Report and we have taken steps over the past four years to help Member States meet the urban challenge.

This is why way back in 2019, the United Nations Habitat Assembly adopted the first ever strategy to position the sustainable urbanisation as means to achieve global agendas. The four sub-programmes of our Strategic Plan 2020-2023 remains robust and relevant. They aim to help Member States:

- (i) Reduce poverty and inequality;
- (ii) Achieve urban prosperity and economic transformation;
- (iii) Implement climate action and environmental sustainability commitments
- (iv) Develop resilience to deal with urban crisis and recovery

These four domains of change have enabled UN-Habitat to direct our work on urban development towards the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and global initiatives on peace building and conflict prevention. They have also enabled the organization to develop policy advisory and technical assistance to Member States that address the specific recommendations of the Quadrennial Report on housing, financing, climate resilience, and post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction.

UN-Habitat has further positioned the New Urban Agenda by facilitating the implementation of the UN systemwide strategy for sustainable urban development. Endorsed by the Secretary-General and Chief Executives Board, the strategy promotes integrated programming and helps UN entities adopt approaches that enable them to fulfil the urban dimensions of their respective mandates. The strategy helps coordinate UN support to Member States in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve SDG targets, as noted by the President of ECOSOC in his statement to the General Assembly.

As we continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Habitat assisted with the preparation of the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urbanizing World. Nine months into the pandemic, working with nearly 2000 cities representing over 1 billion global citizens, the UN-Habitat Report on Cities and Pandemics was published. Further reflections were garnered from programming to support cities, primarily in Africa and Asia, to assist countries develop social and economic responses to the pandemic.

The pandemic, the climate crisis and growing conflict around the world highlights the need to strengthen multi-level governance. How cities and national governments coordinated their response to the public health crisis often depended on multi-governance mechanisms and practices.

In 2020, the Secretary-General called upon UN-Habitat to lead the UN Task Force on Future of Cities to promote multi-level governance. This included identifying institutional mechanisms to engage local governments in intergovernmental and national planning processes. Drawing upon the work of the Task Force, the Secretary-General recommended in his Report on Our Common Agenda the establishment of the Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments. The Task Force subsequently prepared terms of reference for the Advisory Group for consideration by the Secretary-General.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

In conclusion, I wish to encourage Member States present today to seize this moment to re-engage with the New Urban Agenda. Rather than see it as a parallel process, I urge you to use it as catalyst. At a time of health emergencies, climate crises, and conflict, the New Urban Agenda offers a pathway toward sustainable development. It is truly a ray of hope in these challenging times.

Thank you very much.