

**Speech by the Executive Director, UN-Habitat, on the occasion of the Official Closing, Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF11)**

- Your Excellency, Nuno Gomes Nabiam, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau,
- Honourable Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and Government Plenipotentiary for the preparation of the World Urban Forum, representing the Local Organising Committee of World Urban Forum 11,
- Honourable Marcin Krupa, Mayor, Katowice
- Your Excellency, Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, President of the United Nations Economic & Social Committee
- Your Excellency Madame Martha Delgado, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly
- Honourable General Mahmoud Sharawy, Minister of Local Development, Arab Republic of Egypt
- Excellencies, distinguished guests,
- Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen

The Government of Poland as well as the city of Katowice, have exceeded all expectations, helping us make WUF11 the most memorable and accessible event. Over 22,000 registered to attend in person. Out of these, 10,626 from 155 countries had been badged and attended in person. Besides, 6,153 participants connected online.

It is my privilege to welcome the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Collen Vixen Kelapile. Thank you for leading the noble initiative Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanisation & New Urban Agenda in New York. Let me also thank His Excellency Ambassador Albuquerque of Brazil, Chair of the UN-Habitat Executive Board, for his guidance and initiative, to lead the Friends of UN-Habitat in Nairobi with a focus on resource mobilisation. A stronger and well well-funded UN-Habitat is essential, for the delivery of our mandate, to better serve the Member States and our communities.

Let me take the opportunity to thank the leadership of the Honourable State Secretary, **Malgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak** and the local organising committee, for recognising and harnessing the power of urbanization, to create jobs, provide housing, and welcome into their homes, over 3 million refugees from Ukraine.

Let me also take this opportunity, to acknowledge the contributions of Her Excellency, Madame Martha Delgado, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly and Co-Chair of the Advisory Group. My dear sister, let us work together to bring the key messages from all the constituencies of WUF11, to the UN-Habitat Assembly in June next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I continue to be inspired by our partnership with Katowice. Since we jointly initiated the *Sustainable City Programme* in 1992. Citizens of Katowice have truly transformed the city into a vibrant place to live, work and play. Let me thank Honourable Marcin Krupa, Mayor of Katowice, for his hospitality.

With thanks to the WUF11 Advisory Group, led by His Excellency Ambassador Marek, representative of the host country, and H.E. Marta Delgado, the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, I have been well-guided throughout the 11th session of the World Urban Forum.

The Advisory Group noted that:

- 1) We need to focus on pathways towards transformative change, and investigate examples of cities that have reached a tipping point, and turn the corner by instituting innovative and progressive policies and planning regimes.
- 2) Urban leaders must move from incrementalism and work to achieve fundamental shifts in urban environments, systems of governance and forms of habitation.
- 3) COVID-19 has shown that short-term, radical change is possible, but the challenge is to deliver long-term and sustainable change.

Let me share some key messages from the WUF11:

- 1) The climate emergency, pandemics, the housing crisis, violence, and conflict, all converge in cities.
- 2) If we want to transform to a better urban future, we will have to increasingly deal with urban crises. These crises, such as the growing number of urban poor, demand a fundamental shift, in the way we live and the way we shape our cities. If we don't address these challenges timely and effective, they will inevitably cast adverse impact on sustainable urbanization, and cost us a much higher price to fix in the future.
- 3) There was a clear recognition that Mayors and local governments are both first responders, and are in a position to mobilise their communities to make that shift happen, accelerating towards greener, healthier, and more resilient cities.
- 4) National governments can leverage this immense potential, through clarity on multi-level governance, bringing youth and local governments to the decision-making table, and investing early with the help of the private sector.
- 5) Urban recovery frameworks allow us to connect locally driven people-centered recovery with nationally-led interventions.

6) Across the 10 events on Ukraine during WUF11, there was a clear call to sustain the decentralisation gains, and ensure broad-based collaboration, anchored in local governments.

The WUF is a unique United Nations event led by partners. We have had four stakeholder assemblies, compressing groups of women, grassroots, youth and the business sector. Let us not forget our commitments both at the personal and individual level, as well as in our capacity as an organisation, partnership, city and nation.

I am happy to report that we have acted on the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions and commitments. Here at Katowice, we have 51 commitments. We are keeping the declared actions platform open till 31 July 2022, so please record your declared actions, which will be reflected in the final WUF11 report!

I was also very pleased to have launched the “World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities”, with the below 6 key findings:

- 1) Humanity’s future is undoubtedly urban, despite COVID-19
- 2) The COVID pandemic has reversed years of progress made in the fight against poverty, resulting in the emergence of newly poor people
- 3) Adoption of the “the 15-minute city” concept, whose underlying principle is that daily needs are close at hand in every neighborhood – within a 15-minute journey

- 4) Informal employment needs to be supported, not punished
- 5) Vision for an optimistic future of cities must embody a new social contract
- 6) Climate change and environmental concerns increasingly dominate future scenarios

UN-Habitat launched the New Urban Agenda Platform to monitor the implementation of these commitments as mandated by the UN General Assembly at Abu Dhabi. In the past two years, the NUA platform has actively recorded 38 country level reports. We continue to encourage cities to do Voluntary Local Reviews. To date, 127 Voluntary Local Reviews from 34 different countries have been published with 10 additional ones on the way.

From a legacy perspective, I am happy that the WUF alumni network made up of all the former, current and future host of WUFs, have fulfilled their declared actions to work together, to be champions of sustainable urbanisation in their respective regions. They have all pledged to support the next host of WUF, the Government of Egypt and the City of Cairo.

At the United Nations, we are ready to work as one. 12 UN Resident Coordinators were present at WUF11. Throughout the forum, we had high level representation from our sister agencies. We are very happy to see the active participation by UN agencies in the advisory group, and the various sessions highlighting the key concerns around climate, development, and migration.

Finally, let me make three announcements:

- 1) I have the pleasure of announcing that the global observance of the World Habitat Day will be in Balikesir, Turkiye. This will be on the first Monday of October, which falls on 3 October 2022.
- 2) I would also like to announce at WUF11, that the Government of Egypt will be the host of the 12th session of the World Urban Forum, in Cairo, 2024.
- 3) I am very pleased to announce that, the expression of interest for the thirteen session World Urban Forum, is now officially open.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We could not have done it without our volunteers. At WUF11, we had 250 volunteers from 24 countries. Thank you all very much for your support. We also had 40 officers from UNDSS, who kept us safe.

Finally, let me thank all the people behind the scenes. Our interns came from 24 different countries. The main service providers include MTP Grupa and Mazurkas. Let me also thank UNDSS and the Polish Police, for their services and for keeping us safe. Not forgetting the media, both international and local media. My team, colleagues here in Katowice and those at Nairobi, and our offices throughout the world, thank you for this whole of house effort.

Colleagues,

We do not have much time to achieve the 169 targets of the SDG 2030. We have seven and half years, or 90 months, or more precisely 2,742 days left, to implement the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The time to act is now.

Thank you.