

Speech of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat at the High-level opening ceremony of the World Cities Day 2022 in Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Date: 31 October 2022

Honourable Party Secretary of Shanghai Municipal Committee Mr. Chen Jining

His Excellency, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD), the People's Republic of China Mr. Ni Hong

Honourable Mayor of Shanghai Mr. Gong Zheng and host of the 2022 World Cities Day Global Observance in the People's Republic of China

Her Excellency, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, Under-Secretary for Multilateral Affairs of Mexico Madame Martha Peralta Delgado,

First Vice Mayor of Shanghai Municipal Government Mr. Wu Qing

Vice Mayor of Shanghai Mr. Peng Chenlei

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me thank the Government of China and the City of Shanghai for hosting the 2022 Global Observance of World Cities Day. In 2014, under Resolution 68/239, the General Assembly designated 31 October as World Cities Day. The General Assembly invites States, the United Nations system, in particular UN-Habitat, relevant international organizations, civil society and all other relevant stakeholders to observe and raise awareness of the Day.

This year's World Cities Day will focus on promoting all levels of government and all relevant stakeholders to reflect on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Subject experts will be highlighting concrete efforts to translate policy into practice. The theme of World Cities Day 2022 is Act Local to Go Global.

This year also marks the return of the World Cities Day to the city of Shanghai.

Although we are all observing World Cities Day virtually, please know that I am with all of you in spirit.

Distinguished delegates,

World Cities Day 2022 marks the second year that we are all dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic. For the developing world, the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 reverses the gains made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the 2022 UN-Habitat World Cities Report, by 2030, the number of people living in extreme poverty will be above 600 million, resulting in a global poverty rate of 7.4 percent.

As a former mayor in a developing country and having grown up in rural settings, I understand firsthand why we need to act local. In Africa, only 54 percent of the urban population has access to clean water and only 28 percent of city dwellers have access to basic sanitation. The situation is not much better in Latin America and the Caribbean where only 40 percent of the urban population has access to basic sanitation services.

Excellencies
Honorable Minister,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We hear the urgent call from our youths and the younger generation. They tell us that their future is in peril. They are growing up in the challenging age of the ‘quadruple Cs’: crises related to Covid, conflict, climate change and capital.

If we want to go global in the age of the ‘quadruple Cs’, we must act local. In the case of waste management, which is a major contributor to environmental pollution, the global average of waste management is 82 percent. But only 55 percent of solid waste is being managed in controlled facilities. In the municipalities of Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, where people live in ecologically fragile environments, the average solid waste collection rate is less than 60 percent.

Let us join hands to achieve Zero Waste. Let us commit to turn waste into wealth. Join UN-Habitat’s Global Waste Wise Cities Campaign. Here is one way we can act local to go global!

Honorable Mayor,

Once again, I am proud to be able to pen a statement for the Shanghai Manual of best practices in sustainable urban development. I am never tired when repeating the theme of World Cities Day 2022: Act Local to Go Global.

Let me recall that the movement towards greater local government participation in supporting national governments implement the New Urban Agenda is gathering speed. UN-Habitat offers expert guidance and capacity development for national and sub-national governments to develop, implement and monitor and evaluate National Urban Policies and Sub-national Urban Policies. We also support urban profiling of cities and Voluntary Local Review.

Honorable Minister,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the leadership of His Excellency President Xi Jin Ping. In the past decade, China has made great strides in the provision of housing and the uplifting of millions of its citizens out of poverty.

I count on the support of all Governments to advocate for and implement the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat is also preparing the Secretary-General's report on the achievements of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which will be presented in New York in July next year. We need your help to ensure that local actions taken in the entire rural-urban continuum is captured in this global report.

I am grateful to the Government of China for initiating the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award), which is a global initiative jointly established by UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of China, and the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. The award seeks to recognise transformative action by local and municipal governments that promote sustainable development.

Thank you for your leadership at the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. We must not forget the urban-rural continuum. No city, no matter how large or rich can exist without its hinterland. We must make sure that as cities prosper, they do not negatively impact the people and the environment that made all that wealth possible.

I am also taking this opportunity to welcome you and all ministers of housing and local government to join us in Sham El-Sheikh in Egypt in the Cities and Climate Change event, organised by the COP27 Presidency on 17 November 2022. I am sure, Honorable Minister, that China's efforts to align sustainable urban development with climate adaptation efforts will be most welcome at COP27.

Finally, let me thank the Government of China, the Mayor of Shanghai and the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, Mme. Martha Delgado, for their support at the Global Observance of World Cities Day.

Xie Xie
Thank You.