

Speech at the Second Session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat

Date: 21 November 2022

Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office Nairobi,

His Excellency Silvio Alburquerque, Chair of the Executive Board and the Permanent Representative of Brazil to UN-Habitat,

Honourable Martha Delgado, President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly,

Honourable Zacharia Mwangi Njeru, Cabinet Secretary for The Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of the UN-Habitat Executive Board,

Your Excellencies,

Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning, good afternoon and good evening to all of you.

Let me thank my sister Zainab Hawa Bangura, the Director-General of the United Nations Office of Nairobi and her team as well as our Host Country, the Government of Kenya, for ensuring that we are able to meet in-person in Nairobi. UNON continues to improve its virtual services to allow us to be connected to participants from all over the world. This is much appreciated.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for their support for UN-Habitat throughout 2022, which was expressed during the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in April and at the World Urban Forum at Katowice in July. I would also like to thank the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, Madame Martha Peralta Delgado, who attended the World Habitat Day in Balikiser, Turkiye under the patronage of Her Excellency, Madame Ermine Erdogan, the First Lady of Turkiye. A special thanks to H.E. President Xi Jing Ping of China for his congratulatory message and for the hosting of World Cities Day in Shanghai, China.

It is important that we renew our commitment to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to narrow the gap. I would like to thank the Government of Spain for supporting the Local 2030 Coalition. My appreciation also to my sister H.E. Madame Amina Mohamed, the Deputy-Secretary General for her continued support of UN-Habitat’s focal point role in localising the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last week, the world’s population reached the 8 billion mark. According to the 2022 UN-Habitat World Cities Report, most of them will be living in urban areas. As we envision the future of cities, we see millions of people driven to urban centres by crisis, whether that is man-made or arising from extreme climate events. We also see on the horizon a major economic crisis making worse the cost of living and homelessness. They unfairly impact the most vulnerable people including women, youth and children essentially robbing them of their future.

33 million people in Pakistan were displaced through extreme climate events. At COP27, 30 ministers of housing and sustainable urbanisation attended the ministerial roundtable highlighting the important role of climate and urbanisation. This follows the rising importance of our mandate in platforms such as the G7, the Commonwealth of Nations and now at COP27. We need to rise above our differences to enhance multilateral cooperation to support each other in this era of global crises. To quote the Secretary-General: “the blame game is a recipe for mutually assured destruction.”

UN-Habitat will continue to work with our city networks to scale up the transformative power of urban solutions. Our 2023 world urban campaign is to reach out to 1000 cities and 1 billion persons to support the declared actions from the 11th session of the World Urban Forum. All of these inputs will help the Secretariat to prepare to support Member States on the road to the 2nd UN-Habitat Assembly in June next year.

In the coming three days, we will have the opportunity to review our achievements and the challenges we face in the coming year. I am proud and grateful to Member States for their support as we implement the austerity measures approved by the Executive Board. We are poor in resources but rich in passion for our mandate and our mission. I look forward to a robust and pragmatic session over the next three days. Let us arrive at decisions we can all support and backed up by the resources we need to get the job done.

Thank you, Excellency Chair.