



UN-HABITAT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
unhabitat-info@un.org | www.unhabitat.org

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Executive Director of UN-Habitat statement at SDGs in focus: SDG 11 and interlinkages with other SDGs- –Sustainable cities and communities

HLPF Plenary

Thursday, 13 July 2023, 10:10 AM-1:00 PM, Conference Room 4, UN HQ in New York

H.E. Mr. Arrmanatha Christiawan Nasir, Vice President of ECOSOC and Ambassador of Indonesia

H.E. Mr. Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Vice President of ECOSOC and Ambassador of Zimbabwe

- Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
- Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Thousands of years ago, human beings made a choice that reshaped history irreversibly.

They chose to come together in cities and settlements to maximize the advantages of proximity, scale, efficiency, security, community.

This choice, and the continued rise of urbanization, transformed the social, economic and political configuration of human society forever.

Today, our planet is majority urban.

We have therefore once again arrived at a crossroad where we must make a choice.

What kind of cities are we fostering?

What kind of future lies ahead for today's 4.4. billion urban dwellers and many more in the coming decades?

Cities of access or cities of exclusion?

Cities of integration or cities of segregation?

Cities of resilience or cities of vulnerability?

Cities of prosperity or cities of deprivation?

Cities of stability or cities of insecurity?

The results of SDG 11 progress report launched at this HLPF are alarming.

Overall, we are lagging significantly behind.

The evidence points to a great urban divide- where our cities are divided along many fractures such that the majority may be excluded, vulnerable, marginalized.

Global divergence is manifesting in our cities including inequality, natural disasters, and digital divides.

We need to rethink the choices we are making about how we plan and manage our cities and human settlements.

We need to ask if we are failing, on what, and why.

It is time to act NOW.

We have no shortage of commitments. We have no shortage of ambitions.

Through SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda, world leaders have clearly defined a vision for cities and human settlements and the targets required to achieve the vision.

We know what we need to do. We know how to do it.

Now is the time to translate ambitions into action.

Now is the time to invest in high impact solutions across our cities and human settlements.

Now is the time to fully empower and strengthen local and regional governments who deliver the SDGs every day, everywhere.

Now is the time to anticipate urban future growth and evolution to plan and respond in advance.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

We have a unique opportunity to reset our cities and human settlements so that we secure a better quality of life for everyone, everywhere.

Change is possible.

Change has happened.

Change is happening.

The SDG 11 progress report highlights the many innovative solutions championed by local, regional and national governments to improve housing, transport, public space, air quality, public participation, disaster risk reduction, among others.

Yet, given the huge magnitude and scale of the global urban transition, we have a long way to go.

We need transformative shifts beyond business as usual.

One of the most critical shifts we need is on housing.

More than 75 years ago housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today, we are far from this commitment. Billions remain without adequate housing.

From slums, to homelessness, to extreme affordability challenges- no country, no city, no community, no group is spared from the global housing crisis.

Housing is a fundamental basis for dignity, health, peace and prosperity- for me, for you, for each and every one of us.

It equally determines the future of our children and their children. Housing deprivation can have lasting, determinantal consequences.

But with the right policy and investments, housing can positively transform lives, livelihoods and economies.

We must place housing at the center of public policy priorities.

Transformative shifts in housing will have transformative impacts for everyone, everywhere.

Indeed, housing is a foundation for many of the SDG targets related to poverty, inequality, health, education, and so on.

This is why during the recently concluded second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, member States adopted a resolution on adequate housing.

Through the resolution, an open-ended intergovernmental expert group and data platform on housing to accelerate and scale efforts will be established.

This opens new and unique possibilities for once again elevating global commitments but importantly also driving action.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the partners and stakeholders who contributed to the 2023 SDG 11 synthesis report, especially the various custodian agencies of SDG 11.

Thank you!