

**Speech by the Executive Director, UN-Habitat**  
**Ms. Anaclaudia Rossbach**  
**Closing of the Resumed Second Session of the UN-Habitat Assembly**  
**Friday 20 May 2025**

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Excellency President of UN-Habitat Assembly Enrique Javier Ochoa,  
Honorable Ministers  
Heads of delegations,  
Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of Member States, Partners, and  
Friends,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we come to the close of this resumed session of the UNHABITAT Assembly and having had the privilege of working with you and benefitting from your guidance throughout the week, allow me to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya, Dr. William Ruto, for honoring us with his presence here and for steadfast support to UN-Habitat. His and the gracious hospitality and Kenya's continued collaboration with our programme are deeply appreciated. I also extend heartfelt thanks to the people and government of Kenya for their warm welcome and unwavering partnership. Our shared strategic vision for adequate housing and sustainable urbanization stands as a beacon of hope for millions around the world.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, for his wise message to us and continuous support UNHABITAT has received from him. I also extend heartfelt appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Philémon Yang, and the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Bob Rae, for their inspiring message and steadfast support in elevating human settlement agenda and urbanization as a central pillar of the global development agenda.

To Ms. Paola Jiron, President of the National Council for Territorial Development of Chile, thank you for powerfully reminding us that urbanization must be at the heart of our development agenda. Your call to care deeply about how our cities grow resonates with the urgency of our mission.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my sister, the Mayor of Paris, Ms. Anne Hidalgo, for sharing the inspiring journey of Paris toward becoming a truly sustainable city. Her leadership exemplifies how bold vision, and inclusive planning can transform urban landscapes for the better.

And to Governor Johnson Sakaja of Nairobi, his insightful contributions to urban discourse have enriched our dialogue and grounded our discussions in the lived realities of rapidly growing cities.

To Honourable Cabinet Secretary Alice Wahome, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude. Despite your demanding schedule, you remained with us throughout the day and well into the evening, demonstrating unwavering dedication to the success of this Assembly. I also warmly thank Honorable Thani Mohamed Soilihi, Minister in charge of Francophonie and International Cooperation of France, for your thoughtful contributions and exemplary leadership in chairing the High-Level Dialogue on Housing.

Excellencies,

Mr. President, I would like to pay special tribute to you, my friend and brother from Mexico. I thank you most sincerely for taking the time to be with us over the past two days and for your exemplary leadership in steering this process with such clarity and commitment. Through you, I wish to convey our deep appreciation to the Government of the United Mexican States, which has ably presided over this Assembly for the past six years, representing the GRULAC region with distinction.

Your leadership, alongside that of Honorable Martha Delgado, Román Meyer, and Edna Elena Vega has ensured continuity, stability, and purpose, even in the most challenging of times. You have led this Assembly with wisdom, integrity, and vision, and your dedication has been a guiding light for us all. During our recent visit to Mexico, we had the opportunity to witness the transformative impact of inclusive and forward-looking urban policies championed by your government.

***I now invite all present to join me in a well-deserved and resounding round of applause in your honor. Mexico's leadership has truly been instrumental in shaping the future of this Assembly.***

I would be remiss if I don't mention and thank the significant contribution for of the outgoing Bureau of the Assembly, Mexico, Germany, China, Poland and to Ghana for its readiness to step in when called upon to support the President and for ably chairing the informal consultations throughout the second session of the Assembly, ensuring its smooth and effective conduct.

Excellencies,

As we bring this resumed session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly to a close, I rise with deep admiration for the spirit of unity and purpose that has defined our deliberations. This week, we were not just participants in an Assembly, but we were architects of a shared future.

Mr. President at this stage it is very important for me to extend my sincere appreciation to all Member States. Through long nights and tireless negotiations, you demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the organization. Your successful endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 is not just a procedural milestone—it is a bold declaration of intent to see this organization survive.

Your long nights paid off. I am very pleased that Member States have adopted the decisions on the dates and provisional agenda of the Third session of the United Nations HABITAT Assembly. We have indeed heard and reacted positively to the voices of the people we serve.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR), ably led by the High Commissioner of Pakistan, and to the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives—comprising Colombia, Tanzania, and Belgium for their invaluable leadership and guidance. I would also like to extend special thanks to His Excellency Pedro Cortés Ruiz, Permanent Representative of Colombia and Vice-Chair of the CPR, for his steadfast commitment and tireless efforts throughout this process.

And to all delegates, thank you for your flexibility, collegiality, and collaboration that you have demonstrated by staying late at night and ensuring the success

of this Assembly. Many of you began this journey early this week and I am pleased to say that we can see the fruits of our successful deliberations.

At this juncture I would like to give you a bit of data to exemplify the commitment of countries to UN-Habitat. This week, we welcomed 657 delegates from 118 Member States and 4 Observer countries, including 1 Deputy Prime Minister, 42 Ministers, 15 Deputy Ministers, and 20 Governors and Mayors. We were also honored to host 213 stakeholders from academia, civil society, foundations, the private sector, and local and regional governments. In total, we registered 1360 participants who joined us in person. This is a powerful testament to the global momentum behind sustainable urbanization.

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

This Assembly was convened at a time of profound global uncertainty, but also at a moment of immense possibility. In your voices, your debates, and even your disagreements, we heard a shared vision: that our human settlements and cities must be engines of equity, dignity and economic sustainability.

The Strategic Plan we have adopted is ambitious yet firmly grounded in realism. But strategy alone is not enough, it must be matched by concrete implementation. That is why, earlier this week, I convened a dialogue with key international financial institutions to explore innovative financing solutions. Our objective is clear: no resolution should remain unfunded, and no plan should be left on paper. UN-Habitat remains fully committed to expanding and strengthening these partnerships, and we look to our Member States to honour their commitments and continue their generous contributions, so that together, we can deliver transformative impact where it is needed most.

We also convened a Global Stakeholders Forum, where participants strongly endorsed the Plan's focus on adequate housing, access to land, and basic services, especially for those in slums and informal settlements. Stakeholders called for structured dialogue and formal mechanisms for collaboration, accountability, and implementation. We heard you, and we will act.

In this respect, let me reaffirm that UN-Habitat is your strategic partner in crafting and implementing policies that reflect your national realities and are anchored in the principles of the United Nations Charter. Whether it's upgrading informal settlements as human right, integrating climate resilience and gender perspectives into urban planning, or reforming land governance, we stand ready to walk this journey with you.

Your message was clear: localization matters. Local and regional governments are not just implementers, they are innovators. They are the bridge between global ambition and local action. I thank our local government partners, civil society, women's groups, youth advocates, and people with disabilities for reminding us that participation is power.

I would like us to come together to bid farewell to Dr. Michal Mlynár, our Deputy Executive Director, who joined us in April 2023. Michal also capably handled the leadership transition in 2024, when he served as our Acting Executive Director, prior to my arrival in Nairobi.

During his time with us, Michal has led the process of strengthening trust between UN-Habitat and the Member States and has supported the development of our Strategic Plan 2026–2029 and our work on smart cities. One of the tasks closest to his heart has been that of championing innovation and inclusivity of youth and children, bringing their voices to UN-Habitat's programming and advocacy.

We are deeply grateful for his service, and we wish him every success in the next chapter of his journey.

Excellencies,

As we approach the 50th anniversary of UN-Habitat, we reflect on our journey with pride, but also with urgency. Urbanization is reshaping our world at an unprecedented pace. Our response must be just as bold, just as fast, and just as inclusive. Let this Assembly be remembered as a turning point, a moment when we chose transformation over inaction, resilience over reaction, and unity over division.

Let us now move from words to action. Let us build not just houses, but homes. Not just infrastructure, but opportunity. Not just plans, but a future

Finally let me congratulate the newly elected President of the Assembly share by Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates, the vice president of the Assembly Ethiopia and the Rapporteur – Mexico. The Bureau of the Executive Board, Chaired by Germany, Vice Chair Slovakia, Brazil, China, and Rapporteur Cameroon. The newly elected Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representative chaired by Sweden, Vice Chair; China and Rapporteur Kenya.

I cannot conclude these remarks without expressing my heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated UN-Habitat team, our colleagues at UNON, our Legal Advisors including Mr. Stadler Trengove, our interpreters, Conference Services Officers, IT and technical support teams, DSS Security, the Joint Medical Service, the Interaction Platform team, and UNTV. Your exceptional care, dedication, and tireless work behind the scenes have been instrumental in ensuring the smooth and successful conduct of this Assembly. I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support.

Together, let us shape cities that are sustainable, inclusive, and resilient—for generations to come.

Thank you. Asante Sana. Merci beaucoup. Muchas gracias. Shukran.

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