UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Malaysian Urban Forum 2019

Closing Remarks

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Salutations _____

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Honorable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening!

I still see beaming faces in the room!

In my book, I take it as a positive sign of two intensive but days of discussions and debates on sustainable urbanization issues in Malaysia.

This gives me great joy, for as a Malaysian, my personal quest for improving quality of life for all through sustainable urban development globally starts here. It starts in Malaysia, it starts with us.

For this reason, as I mentioned throughout the Forum, when you think sustainable urban development in Malaysia and in South-East Asia, think UN-Habitat!

Let me say this again: when you think sustainable urban development, think UN-Habitat!

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been reflecting a great deal on what I heard since yesterday. My reflection, so far, has revolved around three main points, which I would like to share with you.

Number one: the need to plan cities well.

As urbanization is increasing and happening very rapidly, there is need for better planning to have a better control of urban expansion and actively ensure that future urban forms foster sustainability and a better quality of life for all citizens.

Urban planning is more than a technical tool, it is an integrative and political participatory process that addresses and helps to reconcile competing interests related to urban development. We need to plan if we want sustainable urbanization.

Urban planning needs to work at the service of the public good, representing collective values and agreements, with development plans and solutions that address pressing needs of cities, while at the same time maximizing their comparative advantages. It must be a central component of the renewed urban governance that promotes local democracy, inclusion and transparency.

For this to happen, urban plans must be integrated and holistic, because sustainable urban development is a crosscutting issue and it is only by clearly capturing all its dimensions in a unified way that success will be achieved.

My second point is about the need for effective urban governance.

As I mentioned yesterday, weak institutions and poor governance mechanisms increase the risk of low performance, waste of resources, inefficient sectoral interventions and overall lack of progress.

The ability of cities to meet the massive global challenges originating within and beyond their borders will hinge on our collective ability to articulate a new urban governance paradigm, which key attributes include, at the highest level:

- **Inclusivity:** the ability for all to participate in planning, development, and evolution of the spaces they live in;
- **Long term and integration:** plans and policies should have horizons that reflect the pace of urban development;
- **Multiscale and multilevel:** this requires vertical coordination across levels of government and horizontal coordination across issues and social sectors;
- **Territorial approach:** cities are complex ecosystems, defined by interactions between their built and natural environments and the people who inhabit them;

- **The need for data:** to make evidence-based and sound policies;
- **Digitally proficiency:** new technologies create challenges and opportunities for cities. They lower the costs of information acquisition and analysis and facilitate greater transparency, participation, and accountability.

UN-Habitat will work with national and local governments to strengthen urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include urban stakeholders, as well as appropriate checks and balances, providing predictability and coherence in urban development plans to enable social inclusion, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental protection.

My third and last point is about the need to approach sustainable urban development as an opportunity.

We have debated the challenges of urbanization in Malaysia over the past two days. However, the urban transformation is an opportunity to look at cities as active components for improving living conditions for all along the urban rural continuum. It is an opportunity to create more equal, inclusive and just societies. It is an opportunity to protect ecological assets.

Honorable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Cities are not cold and static places. They are dynamic and powerful instruments of change and transformation. It is a new paradigm, it is the only paradigm.

I would like to conclude by once again thanking the organizers of MUF 2019. On behalf of my colleagues who travelled all the way from Nairobi and from our offices in Fukuoka and Bangkok I would like to express my sincere appreciation for making us part of this event. We look forward to continue working with you and with Malaysia.

I thank you for your attention!