

PRESS RELEASE

Cities are engines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Much of the 2030 Agenda will be ‘fought and won’ in urban centres, where more than half the world’s population live

New York City, July 17 – With the majority of the global population now living in cities and the numbers growing daily, making cities inclusive, sustainable, resilient and safe is critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to speakers at a high level UN meeting today.

The event, led by the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) on the margins of this week’s High-level Political Forum, focused on how the cities of the world are accelerating progress towards the SDGs, as well as showcasing how SDG implementation in cities can contribute to transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

Chairing the meeting, UN Deputy Secretary-General and UNSDG Chair Amina Mohammed said that “cities are economic powerhouses with an estimated global GDP share of 88 percent by 2025. However, cities are also locus of complex and interconnected challenges: producing more than 50 percent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions and using 80 percent of the world’s energy.” She concluded that “we need to get urbanization right to achieve the 2030 Agenda.”

The event provided a unique opportunity for Member States, city authorities and non-state actors to come together to showcase their own innovative work, and to illustrate how the UN system can support these efforts.

Bahrain’s Housing Minister Mr Basim Bin Yacob AlHamer; the Mayor of Bangangté, Cameroon, Ms Célestine Ketcha Courtès; New York City’s Commissioner for International Affairs, Ms Penny Abeywardena; the President of United Cities and Local Governments, Mr Parks Tau; and the Chair of the

international women's grassroots network Huairou Commission, Ms Violet Shivutse, discussed how cities and local actors are championing the sustainable urbanization agenda.

UNDP Administrator and UNSDG Vice-Chair Achim Steiner highlighted inequality within cities on issues like income, health, and education but said cities had enormous potential – notably on addressing climate change where they were already leading by example. He called on the international community to unleash the power of cities to help solve global challenges.

Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, told the meeting that cities are “on the frontlines of nearly every global challenge we currently face, and they need to be at the center of our strategy to solve them.” Looking ahead requires new approaches - the “urban development of yesterday will not suffice,” she added.

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About UN Habitat

UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for an urban future. The agency has been focusing on urban development for over 40 years. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions.

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