



## **THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE ON WORLD HABITAT DAY**

5 October 2015

Each year on World Habitat Day, we reflect on the state of human settlements and on what we want the cities of the future to look like.

This year's observance follows the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – an inspiring new framework that will guide our efforts to end poverty and ensure prosperity for all on a healthy planet.

The new Sustainable Development Goals – which include SDG-11 to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” – represent a broad international consensus that recognizes sustainable urban development as a transformational approach. As part of an integrated agenda, cities and human settlements have an important role to play across the entire spectrum of the 2030 Agenda.

The theme of World Habitat Day 2015 is “Public Spaces for All”. Frequently overlooked and undervalued, public spaces are increasingly being recognized as the vibrant, beating hearts of the world's towns and cities, which are today home to half of humanity.

Public spaces are crucial for poor and vulnerable citizens. Improving access to them, and making them safe for women and girls, increases equity, promotes inclusion and combats discrimination. High-quality public spaces encourage people to communicate and collaborate with each other, and to participate in public life. Public spaces can also provide basic services, enhance connectivity, spawn economic activity and raise property values while generating municipal revenue. But successful public spaces do not just happen; they require careful collaboration among local authorities, local inhabitants and other actors.

The Habitat III Conference, to be held in Quito in October 2016, offers an opportunity to point the way toward solutions to the challenges of rapid urbanization.

I look forward to working with all partners to make Habitat III a success – and to enable people everywhere to enjoy public spaces where we are equal, where our cultures and histories are reflected, and where we can shape a future that is safe and sustainable for all.